THE WIRE

adventures in modern music

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Electronica
mapping the new global network

John Oswald
raising the Grateful Dead

John Barry
[illegible] 'n' strings

Don Cherry
the pied piper

Robert Wyatt's
jukebox

Durutti Column

ballad of a thin man

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the rebirth of impulse!

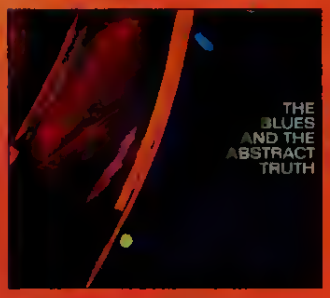
John Coltrane *Stellar Regions* IMP 11692
John Coltrane *tenor*, Alice Coltrane *piano*, Jimmy Garrison *bass* and Rashied Ali *drums*
Seraphic Light, Sun Star, Stellar Regions, Ins, Offering, Configuration, Jimmy's Mode & Transonic. The complete February 15 1967 session available for the first time.
Only one track previously released
Also available on limited edition vinyl

Charles Mingus *Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus, Mingus* IMP 11702
Charles Mingus *bass, piano* and narration with Eric Dolphy *alto & flute*, Richard Williams *trumpet*, Booker Ervin *tenor*, Jaki Byard *piano*, Dannie Richmond *drums* plus others
CD features bonus track *Freedom* not included on the original album. Recorded September 20 and January 20 1963. Also available on limited edition vinyl.

John Coltrane *The Complete Africa Brass Sessions* IMP 21682
2 CD set including the entire May 23 and June 4 1961 sessions on CD for the first time. Includes *Greensleeves* (2 takes), *The Song Of The Underground Railroad, Blues Minor, Africa* (3 takes) and Cal Massey's *The Damned Don't Cry*
Arrangements by Eric Dolphy and Cal Massey

Charles Mingus *The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady* IMP 11742
Mingus' classic suite featuring Charles Mingus *bass* and *piano*, Richard Williams *trumpet*, Charlie Manano *alto*, Jaki Byard *piano*, Dannie Richmond *drums* plus others
Recorded January 20 1963

Archie Shepp *Fire Music* IMP 11582
Featuring Archie Shepp *tenor*, Ted Curson *trumpet*, Marion Brown *alto*, Joe Chambers *drums* plus others
Recorded February 16, March 9 and 28 1965.
CD includes a bonus live version of *Hambone*.
Also available on limited edition vinyl



Oliver Nelson *The Blues And The Abstract Truth* IMP 11542
Oliver Nelson *alto* and *tenor*, Eric Dolphy *alto* and *flute*, Freddie Hubbard *trumpet*, George Barrow *baritone*, Bill Evans *piano*, Paul Chambers *bass* and Roy Haynes *drums*.
Includes *Stolen Moments*
Recorded February 23, 1961
Also available on limited edition vinyl.

Sonny Rollins
East Broadway Run Down IMP 11612
Sony Rollins *tenor*, Freddie Hubbard *trumpet*, Jimmy Garrison *bass* and Elvin Jones *drums*
East Broadway Run Down, Blessing in Disguise and *We Kiss in a Shadow*
Recorded May 9 1966
Also available on limited edition vinyl

Duke Ellington & John Coltrane IMP 11662
Duke Ellington *piano*, John Coltrane *tenor* and *soprano* with Jimmy Garrison and Aaron Bell *bass*, Elvin Jones and Sam Woodyard *drums*
Includes *In A Sentimental Mood, Take The Coltrane, The Feeling Of Jazz* and many more
Recorded September 26 1962.

John Coltrane *A Love Supreme* IMP 11552
John Coltrane *tenor sax*, McCoy Tyner *piano*, Jimmy Garrison *bass* and Elvin Jones *drums*
Part 1 - *Acknowledgement*, Part 2 - *Resolution*, Part 3 - *Pursuance* / Part 4 - *Psalm*
Recorded December 9 1964
Also available on limited edition vinyl

Pharoah Sanders *Karma* IMP 11532
Pharoah Sanders *tenor*, Leon Thomas *vocal & percussion*, Lonnie Liston Smith Jr *piano*, Reggie Workman *bass*, William Hart *drums* and others
The Creator Has a Master Plan and *Colors*.
Recorded February 14 & 19 1969

John Coltrane *Sun Ship* IMP 11672
John Coltrane *tenor*, McCoy Tyner *piano*, Jimmy Garrison *bass* and Elvin Jones *drums*. *Sun Ship, Dearly Beloved, Amen, Attaining* and *Ascent*.
Recorded August 26 1965.

McCoy Tyner Trio featuring Michael Brecker ***Infinity*** IMP 11712
Brand new Impulse! album. McCoy Tyner *piano*, Avery Sharpe *bass*, Aaron Scott *drums* with Michael Brecker *tenor*. Tyner originals and standards including Coltrane's *Impressions* and Monk's *I Mean You*
Recorded April 12-14 1995

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Cover picture of Vini Reilly **Dean Belcher**

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The January 96 issue of *The Wire*

1995: The year in review — *Wire* writers rewind through the most memorable musical moments of the last 12 months; plus our extensive end of year charts: all of 95's most desirable music listed at your fingertips.

On sale Friday 29 December

letters

Silly season

The Wire may still be one of the best magazines in the English language, but it has been getting progressively sillier since the departure of Richard Cook, and Biba Kopf's article on countertenors (*The Wire* 140) is symptomatic of that trend.

I would like to think that he was joking, but it would be quite typical of his approach to music in general if he did actually suggest to James Bowman that he was some kind of circus freak. Chances are that, had he been interviewing a Tuvan throat singer, he would have been a bit more tactful, but still thinking in much the same terms.

Since your magazine uprooted itself from the jazz tradition, your younger writers in particular have fallen into the habit of grossly exaggerating the otherness of what they present, with a particularly inappropriate use of the term 'transgression', as if the music were somehow unnatural or broke some powerful taboo, when the opposite is almost invariably the case. If you're looking for unnatural music, come to my corner of the world and witness the regress of American alternative rock, now that is a truly disturbing sight.

As for cultural prohibitions, be honest what really shocks the English (and their transatlantic cousins) is not going further, but coming closer. Madredeus, Helene Karaindrou and The Bathers' Chris Thompson break more taboos than John Zorn or Tricky, and Eno transgresses less in the wonderful things he does in the studio than in his ability to talk so brilliantly, rationally and at the same time passionately about them. I agree with your magazine's assessment of Scott Walker's *Tilt* — it is a masterpiece — but what purpose is served by presenting it as being something entirely removed from contemporary music? Haven't you heard of Benat Achiary?

It's odd (and worth thinking about) that, apart from Louise Gray, no one up there seems to understand that the European classical tradition is a living popular music, not just an academic discipline. Instead of Biba Kopf's sensationalist approach, wouldn't it have been more enlightening to have had Louise interview a contemporary countertenor and composer such as Wim Mertens? Or discuss A Sei Voci's versions of Allegri's *Miserere* instead of making flippant comments about baroque ornamentation? I realise that these are diametrically opposed to what you think of as being 'new', but even the avant garde should occasionally stop and question its assumptions.

Anyhow, I suppose this letter still qualifies as fan mail, when he's in his own element and not running amok in my cultural backyard. I enjoy Biba Kopf's opinions, and I've kept every issue of yours for the past decade, despite a minimal interest in either jazz or electronic music, so you must be doing something right.

Timothy Heck *Calgary*
(ie@canuck.com)

Wicked Gane

Tim Gane of Stereolab (*The Wire* 140) asserts that the records he pillages from "have had their time, they're dead" and that, as an exercise in self-justification, the ideas need to be taken from them and used (which in itself is fine) "otherwise they're just pieces of entertainment".

Huh? Since when were Faust, Can and Neu! ever just 'entertainment'? I must be living on another planet (instead of merely just The Other Side)

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF,
or fax: 0171 287 4767, or e-mail: *the_wire@ukonline.co.uk*
Every letter published wins a FREE CD

Every so often an artist or group affected by the potential inherent in this genre manages to come along and invest something 'new' into the matrix. It's rare and difficult these days I know, but I can think of Ghost's first (self-titled) effort, which while a homage on one level, managed to push the aural envelope out just a little on another Even the revisionist Queen Elizabeth/Julian Cope project managed to sound exciting and relevant, albeit 25 years down the track in terms of what it was/is

I've tried to like Stereolab and the like (Cul De Sac spring to mind) but there is a difference between reworking old material as appropriation, or more laterally as an abstracted influence, rather than 'deja entendre'. (In Stereolab's case I find it too archly glib and smug in its effervescent knowingness its trafficking in 'cool' and style just ain't enough)

I've just received a copy of Can's *Peel Sessions* and those fuckers sound anything but dead, let alone irrelevant — even 23 years on Welcome back Damo!

Incidentally, I've been playing at least one LP from the Neu! trilogy every week since I bought them 20 years ago They're anything but fossilised to me — still kicking, crisp and offering more inspiration and renewal thus far into the tired old 90s than Stereolab and their ilk. However, I can trace the line that runs from Klaus Dinger's vox on "Lieber Honig 71" to Keiji Haino's on "A Challenge To Fate" in 1995 Let anyone try the notion that Haino's going to be regarded as mere 'entertainment' in 20 years and it'll come out as trite as Gane does in this instance

Simon Reynolds articulately and intelligently expounds the notion that the future of rock could come from this re-engagement of creative 70s experimentation (that was interrupted, not killed, as has already been pointed out in these pages, by the advent of punk and New Wave) and that it is in fact still a vital, relevant and living thing To quote Irmin Schmidt on the cover of the *Peel Sessions*. "There is no Can piece that is finished "

There's style and there's style I feel more comfortable with Julian Cope's neo-Cosmic Couner approach (at least he's wacky enough to make it fun as well) than I do with Stereolab's slick veneer — reminding me of that other fashion plate from the late 70s 'Berlin period' David Bowie Look how hard he has to try to achieve credibility now I haven't heard his new 'concept album' but it seems like it is 'very hard work'

Look out Tim, future's calling to achieve its own life-after-death resurrection in the musical hereafter, Stereolab may yet have to go where no band has Gane before
Kerry Aberhart *Auckland*

Tout a son gout

1 Re Simon Fay's questions (Letters, *The Wire* 141)

"Who the hell reads *The Wire*?" and "Who buys the raved about Keiji Haino records?" Answer A 22 year old female Comparative Literature student living in Paris who is wholeheartedly engrossed in contemporary art and its defence against philistines

"What do they do with it [*The Wire*]?" Answer I read the goddamn sucker (except the bits on Jungle I have no interest in) and then toss it atop the dusty pile of old issues I keep for future consultation and cross-reference, as I am a newcomer, I still have plenty to learn

2 "Siding with noises, musicians discovered duration's impartiality" — John Cage, *Diary How To Improve The World*

Has anybody ever noticed how much Techno/Ambient and its mechanistic serialisation of events and climaxes which refuse to build up to any final conclusion/denouement (revelation), and its severe problems with endings, resembles pornography? Is it too bold to declare Techno/Ambient pornographic, that they partake of the same economy of repetition? Perhaps someone could suggest this to Herr Stockhausen Technocrats are like Sade's libertines, they wish to evangelise, that is to say, find meaningful structure which reveals their (and our own) nostalgia for order in the syntax. We can only take so much chaos, after all
Francisca Monsalve *Paris*

Jaz in the future

Re Jaz Coleman interview (*The Wire* 141) Yes, about time the man got a half decent interview. Your mag is the only one which would give him an interview on his own as a classical composer

Now a Killing Joke interview to coincide with their rumoured Christmas released new album would be splendid, and an education to all that haven't heard KJ They are taking music into the future and have been for 16 years. Come on *Wire*! I'd have thought you'd have paid homage to them by now Better late than never though
J Wright *Hartlepool*

Headbangin'

David Toop (*The Wire* 141) dismisses the notes I wrote for the first three Emanem CDs by saying that I "bang on in paranoid fashion about the total superiority of improvised music over anything else" This shows that he did not take the trouble to read my notes before banging them, because nowhere do I do anything like that. As the music on these CDs is improvised, it is surely not surprising that the accompanying notes touched on the subject of improvised music and were not negative about it.

I do not mind being criticised, but I do react in a paranoid fashion when I am accused of doing something that I did not do I have more than enough real faults already, and do not need any more imaginary ones invented for me, thank you very much
Martin Davidson *London*

Stereolab: smug or stylish?

sounding off

Live dates, multimedia events, happenings...
Compiled by **Rob Young**

News items should reach us by **Friday 8 December** for inclusion in the January 1996 issue

Disobey System shutdown for the country's most raffish club promoters this month There are three ways to say goodbye first, on 8 December, is a FREE outdoor screening of *The K Movie*, depicting the story of Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty's K Foundation's legendary high-art heist and subsequent burning of one million pounds' worth of paper money After the movie, viewers will have the opportunity to buy one second of the film for themselves (well, they've got to recover the cash somehow) The venue is the suitably occluded car park opposite Truman's Brewery Bridge in Brick Lane, East London On 11 December, Disobey moves to Sheffield Leadmill for another FREE event They'll be hooking up with Radio 3's *Mixing It* crew to broadcast sets from Autechre, DJ Beekeeper and a mystery guest, live on air at 10 45pm And finally, on 14, the club returns to its usual venue, Upstairs at the Garage, North London, for performances by The Haunted Boots (identity to be revealed on the night), DJ Beekeeper, and yet more mystery guests Entry to the Christmas kiss-off is £6, for information on all the above events, call 0181 960 9529

Electronic Lounge Gab, goof and gawp with the electronic elite, this month in the company of Hal and Claire from Clear Records, spinning the sounds of machines their parents used London ICA, 9pm-1am, £2 50/£1 50, info 0171 498 3032

Life Without Christmas New orchestral cycle by Georgian composer Giya Kancheli, performed here by The London Sinfonietta and conductor Markus Stenz The programme also includes saxophonist John Harle playing Kancheli's chamber piece *Night Prayers* London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 10 December, 7 45pm, £12 50-£6, Box Office 0171 960 4242

Tiny Tim Tiptoe down memory lane with the psychedelic vaudevillian, appearing in a New Kitsch double bill with London cheesemongers The Mike Flowers Pops Orchestra Tiny Tim, who achieved a certain notoriety at the end of the 60s for his falsetto reinventions of traditional and pop tunes including The Doors' "People Are Strange" and "Tiptoe Through The Tulips", releases a new album this month entitled *Songs For An Impotent Troubadour* He plays at London Union Chapel, 16 December, 8pm Tickets are £10, Box Office is on 0171 226 1686

The Rhythmic New 450-capacity venue in North London for international jazz and improvised music. The Rhythmic's first month of life features appearances from Roy Ayers & Ubiquity (4-9), James Blood Ulmer Experience (11-12), and Steve Williamson (15-16), to kick things off, though, there's a three day Lost Weekend (1-3 December), featuring live performances from Christian McBride, Dave O'Higgins, Eva-Lution, Geno Washington, Brian Priestley, Alan Wilkinson, Foundry, Mo Nazam Band and more 89-91 Chapel Market, entry £5 to members, information on 0171 713 5859

Aphex Twin Richard James's Hear No Evil live soundtrack performance at London's South Bank Centre, which had to be postponed two months ago, has been moved from October to 15 December The Twin will be creating a new soundtrack for Cocteau's 1930 classic *The Blood Of A Poet*, in real-time, in the process erasing the original music by Georges Auric London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 7 45pm, £8/£6, 0171 960 4242

The Rumpus Room Fresh from their excellent stints at Transgressions, DJs MK Ultra, Goldfinger, Xavier and The Kenosha Kid are joined this month by Jon Tye of MLO/Lo Recordings (3 December), Damien Lazarus (10) and Mixmaster Morris (17) The only rule is, there ain't none Sundays at London The Albany, Great Portland Street, 7pm-midnight, £2 before 8 30pm A Rumpus Room New Year's Eve Party is also scheduled for 31 December

Against The Grain A short winter festival organised by the London Musicians' Collective at The Bridewell, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, East London First up (8 December) are Clive Bell and Peter Cusack in a shakuhachi and bouzouki duo, Loophole Cinema's audio-visual installations, and MIOI violin from Kaffe Matthews 9 December Occult Ambient from the semi-legendary Industrial sounscapers :zoviet*france:, violinist Carlos Zingaro Alves, and sampling keyboardist Sonja Mutsaerts. 10 December A trio made up of percussionist Roger Turner, Carlos Zingaro again, and Matt Wand of Stock, Hausen & Walkman young trombonist Gail Brand, and works for self-invented instruments by the Swede Johannes Bergmark. All gigs start at 7 30pm, tickets are £7/£5 or £16/£12 for a season ticket Info/booking on 0171 936 3456

Frank Zappa Anniversary Frank Zappa's posthumous role as figurehead for the oppressed of Eastern Europe will be commemorated by the unveiling of a statue on 16 December in the town of Vilnius, Lithuania Sculpted by local Professor Konstantinas Bogdanas, the monument accompanies the opening of a Zappa library giving access to CDs, books and videos relating to FZ

Music Of The Spheres Mixture of cosmic compositions old and new at London's Union Chapel, as The Infantas Choir join forces with The Smith Quartet to perform English and Spanish Renaissance choral music, John Tavener choral works and Steve Reich's *Octet* and *New York Counterpoint* Union Chapel Auditorium, 2 December, 8pm, £15-£6, 0171 226 1686

Kraftwerk: Radio activity

Entartete Musik Exhibition of photographs relating to music under the Third Reich, with attendant persecution of classical and jazz composers such as Ernst Krenek, Franz Schreker, Erwin Schulhoff, and Berthold Goldschmidt. Season includes films and recitals London Royal Festival Hall (Terrace, Level 5), until 21 January 1996, open daily 10am-10 30pm, free, 0171 960 4242

Zappa's bust

Björk Everyone's favourite eclectro-sprite pops up at four major UK venues in January, with very special guests still to be officially announced Competition for tickets is bound to be fierce, and early application is recommended Dates are Sheffield Arena (19 January, 0114 256 5656), Manchester G-Mex Centre (20, 0161 832 9000), Bournemouth BIC (22, 01202 297297) and London Wembley Arena (25, 0181 900 1234) Tickets are £14 at all venues, with additional £12 50 seats in London For nationwide coach information to all venues, phone 0115 934 2026

Marc Almond The glam savage has added an extra London date he now plays at Shepherd's Bush Empire on 13 and 14 December, supported by Sexus Tickets are £10, info from the Box Office on 0181 740 7474

Towering Inferno The multimedia collective bring their sensational *Kaddish* show back to London after a European tour Shepherd's Bush Empire, 3 December, £10, 0181 740 7474

Kronos Quartet The American New Music quartet premiere two recent works by John Adams and Tan Dun Dun's *Ghost Opera* is derived from a 4000 year old Chinese tradition, and for this performance the group are joined by pipa player Wu Man London

Radio

Kraftwerk (BBC Radio 1, 3 December 7pm) Stuart Maconie presents a history of the German ur-elektronik group, with interviews with ex-members including Ralf Hutter and Wolfgang Flur

Art Ensemble Of Chicago (BBC Radio 3, 2 December 10 30pm) In concert at this year's London Jazz Festival, Lester Bowie and colleagues are joined by five Senegalese drummers

Wayne Shorter (BBC Radio 3, 30 December 10 30pm) The saxophonist's new group recorded on stage in London

Hear And Now (BBC Radio 3, Fridays, times vary) New Music magazine programme Includes Luigi Nono works recorded live at Huddersfield Festival (1 and 8 December), followed by an investigation of the life and work of Giacinto Scelsi and Henry Cowell (15 December 10 40pm), Morton Feldman (22, 10 50pm), and the English Experimentalist tradition with John White, Cornelius Cardew, Gavin Bryars, Benedict Mason and Howard Skempton (29, 10 10pm)

Mixing It (BBC Radio 3, Mondays 10 45pm) Mark Russell and Robert Sandall travel to Sheffield for a live relay from the Disobey club (11 December), and play listeners' favourite records of 1995 (18)

The Chill Out Zone (Kiss 100 FM, Thursdays 1-4am/Sundays 6-7am) Paul Thomas's eclectic Electronica mix, plus guest mixes during December from Bedouin Ascent, Boymerang and Spacetime Continuum

Sharp As A Needle (RTM 103 8 FM, London area, Sundays 9 30pm) John Kennedy's experimental rock sequence moves to new Sunday night slot Listen out for this month's special guests

System 7

Royal Festival Hall, 5 December, £17 50–£12 50, 0171 960 4242

Chiaroscuro Conglomerate of arts producers in musical setting (8 December) at London Station Chambers, 56 Turnmill Street, EC1 Soundtracking the displays of graphic design, interactive technologies, dance, ice sculpture and film will be Global Communication and Acacia, and a rotation of DJs and solo musicians, with more names to be confirmed Tickets are £10 in advance from 0171 249 7196

In Cahoots The group formed by guitarist Phil Miller after the dissolution of Canterbury favourites National Health takes to the road during December The present line-up features saxophonist Elton Dean, trumpeter Jim Dvorak, and Pip Pyle at the drums, mixing the acoustic fusion of classic Soft Machine with Miller's electronic compositions Tour dates as follows London Vortex (3 December, 0171 254 6516), Canterbury Penny Theatre (4, 01227 470512), Cambridge Boat Race (01223 352001), Ramsgate Churchill's Jazz Club (6, 01843 587862), and Old Harlow St John's Arts Centre (8, 01279 442447)

Outcaste The Asian fusion imprint have two events slated for this month 3 December Outcaste host Tricycle Masala at the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn High Road, London, with DJs Ritu, Gilles Peterson and Shabs, plus live tablas from Talvin Singh (£6/£4, 0171 328 1000) 6 December Outcaste recording artist Nitin Sawhney and his group Migration play at London Purcell Room as part of Joyful Noise's New Directions In Urban Music series (7 30pm, £10, 0171 960 4242)

So Long, Farewell

It's with great sadness that we say goodbye this month to Roshmi Khasnavis, who's been tirelessly Administrating at *The Wire* for the last four years Roshmi always made sure a burst of laughter filled the office every ten minutes, but her karate skills ensured we never put a foot out of line We wish her luck in the future □

Audio Active

Live In Brief

Amnesty Benefit Galliano, Nitin Sawhney, Zap Mama and others play for Human Rights. London Royal Festival Hall, 11 December, 7pm, £18–£7.50, 0171 960 4242

Audio Active Japanese dub madness, mixed live by Adrian Sherwood with guest On-U DJs. London LA2, 6 December, 8pm, £8/£7, 0171 434 0403

Autechre High priests of Repetae-tive beats, supported by Freeform Birmingham Oscillate, 2 December, 0121 449 0310

Bark! Tight-knit material from Phil Marks, Marcio Mattos and friends. London Vortex, 10 December, £4/£3, 0171 254 6516

Dirty 3 String driven space rock from New Zealand, plus Tiny Monroe. London Garage, 4 December, £6, 0171 607 1818

Earthling Into orbit with the eccentric rapper. London Subterania, 13 December, £7, 0171 344 0044.

Gavin Friday Latest sighting of the ex-Virgin Prune. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 8 December, £12 50, 0171 960 4242.

Astrud Gilberto Legendary "Girl From Ipanema" singer takes up residency at London's Jazz Cafe, from 1–10 December Tickets £18/£15, 0171 344 0044

PJ Harvey Still no getting rid of her Dublin National Stadium (16 December), Belfast Ulster Hall (17), London Brixton Academy (19), Bristol Colston Hall (20).

Hilliard Ensemble Vocal foursome sing medieval music from Codex Specialnik. London St Clement Danes Church, Strand, 1 December, 8.30pm, £12 50, 0171 960 4242

Mansour Seck Senegalese maestro with seven-piece acoustic group, supported by Baaba Maal Birmingham MAC, 2 December, 0121 440 4221, London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 13 December, 7:45pm, £12.50/ £10.50, 0171 960 4242

Moloko Funky rising stars n Echo Records, with a HipHop set from Beaumont Hannant. Manchester NIA Centre, 16 December, 9pm–2am, £8, 0161 227 9254

Metalheadz Five hours of deep drum 'n' bass, spun by Goldie, Fabio, Peshay, Kemistry & Storm and others. London Blue Note, Sundays, 7pm–midnight, £7/£4, 0171 729 8440

Stealth An evening of four-deck mixing from the irrepressible Ninja Tune crew, including Coldcut, DJ Food, The Herbaliser and Funki Porcini. London Blue Note, Hoxton Square, N1, 7 December, 9:30pm–3am, £5, 0171 729 8440.

System 7 Steve Hillage and wife guest with The Prodigy and The Chemical Brothers. London Brixton Academy, 22 December, 0171 924 9999.

Telstar Ponies Quirky out-rockers plus guests Movietone and DJ Robert Hampson/Main London Garage, 13 December, £5, 0171 607 1818.

The Troupe An evening of Winter improvisation by sextet including The Wire's Richard Scott. Lancaster Ashton Memorial, 2 December, 8pm, £3.50.

Ultramarine Pastoral Ambient with guests Roy Harper, Ozric Tentacles and neo-Progsters Porcupine Tree. London Forum, 1 December, £12, 0171 284 2200.

Trevor Watts Saxophonist on the road with his Moire Music Trio. Leeds Irish Centre (5 December), Chester Alexander's Jazz Theatre (6), Manchester Band On The Wall (7), Lancaster Gregson (8), Brighton Gardner Centre (9), Bristol Albert Inn (10)

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global ear

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

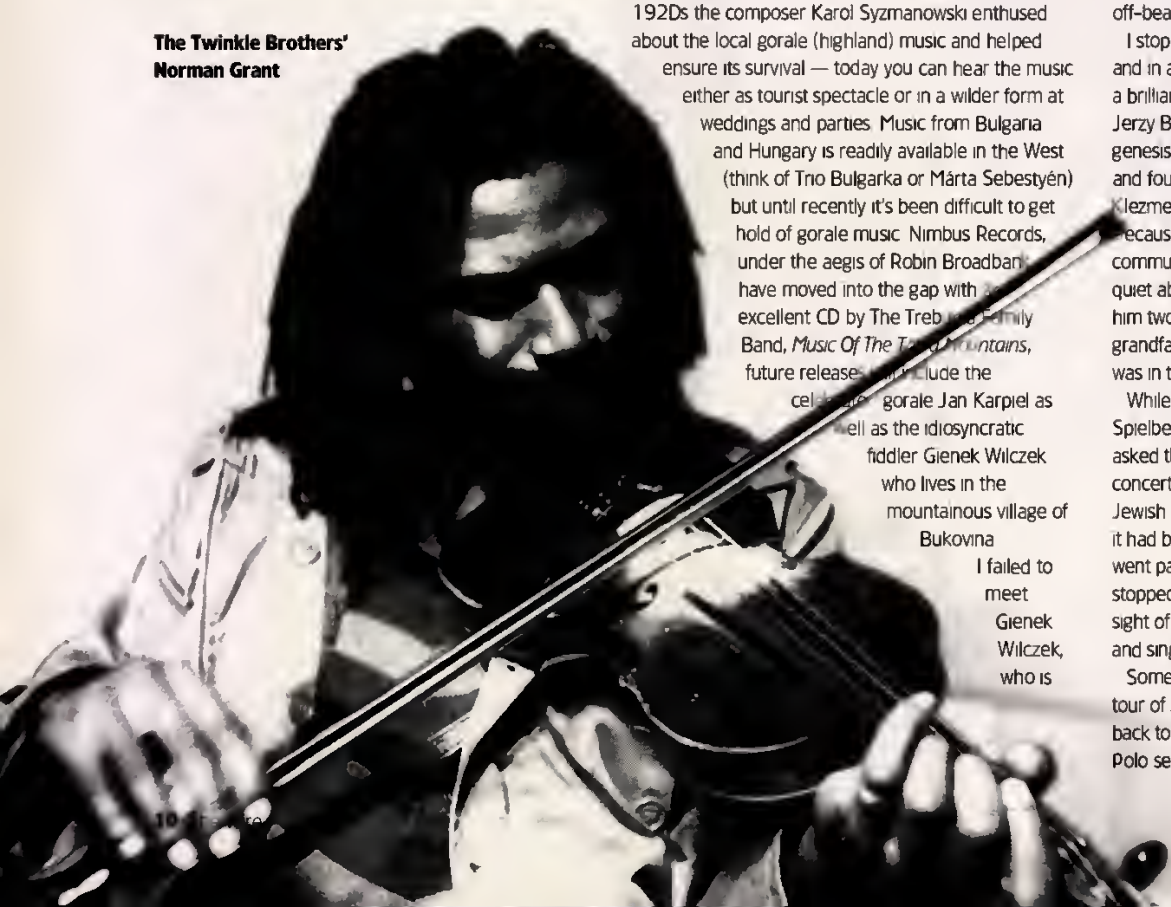
Poland

Warsaw I am staying in a block of flats, newly wired for porn and MTV, at the edge of the old town The area has been completely rebuilt as it used to be before the war, so is actually the *new* old town Students of hyperreality start here Warsaw was hosting the five-yearly Chopin piano competition, with hundreds of pianists from as far afield as South America and Korea converging on the city some radio stations were playing non-stop Etudes and Polonaises But the sound of young Poland seems to be Disco-Polo (and its melodically challenged progeny Techno-Polo) The artists have good capitalist names like The Casino Boys, Manhattan, Milano and, nostalgically redolent of guilt-free 7Ds consumerism, Cinzano

"Disco-Polo is the sound of the Polish suburbs," explained Wlodzimierz Kleszcz, a DJ and promoter who has a World Music show on national radio "[It is] played in large warehouses on the weekend where everyone sweats and are fulled by large quantities of high-octane vodka"

PHOTO PIOTR GRONAU

The Twinkle Brothers' Norman Grant



Kleszcz loves traditional folk music, but "as an act of provocation" he recently persuaded The Twinkle Brothers, Brixton's reggae supremos, to come to Poland and record with The Trebunia Family, a highly respected folk group based in the Tatra Mountains in the south Two records emerged from the meeting, *Reggae In A Polish Stylee* and *Come Back Twinkle 2 Trebunia Family*, both released on Kleszcz's own Kahuna label The music is an uncomfortable marriage at times — not surprisingly, perhaps — but on a few tracks the combination of South London heavy manners and Eastern European sonic folklore works surprisingly well The records have proved to be very popular in Poland — I heard them first in a couple of different pizza joints "They get played a lot in clubs — and for quite a lot of people it's been a strange route back to their own musical culture," says Kleszcz, who has also released some Lee Perry material, including one deranged piece that extends fraternal greetings to all the (non-existent) Eskimos of Poland.

I decided I had better take a train to Zapokane in the Podhale region of the Tatra Mountains in order to meet the Trebunias (although not without a tinge of paranoia the latest criminal gimmick in Poland is for thieves to ambush and then gas entire coaches of trains — the passengers wake up an hour later minus wallets and jewellery)

Zakopane used to be a bohemian retreat but now is 'the winter capital of Poland' and a tounst resort. In the 192Ds the composer Karol Syzmanowski enthused about the local gorale (highland) music and helped ensure its survival — today you can hear the music either as tourist spectacle or in a wilder form at weddings and parties Music from Bulgaria and Hungary is readily available in the West (think of Trio Bulgarka or Márta Sebestyén) but until recently it's been difficult to get hold of gorale music Nimbus Records, under the aegis of Robin Broadbank, have moved into the gap with an excellent CD by The Trebunia Family Band, *Music Of The Tatra Mountains*, future releases include the celebrated gorale Jan Karpiel as well as the idiosyncratic fiddler Gienek Wilczek who lives in the mountainous village of Bukovina

I failed to meet Gienek Wilczek, who is notoriously elusive anyhow, partly because my cab driver refused to take me there he explained that another taxi had been savaged by a bear in the vi only a couple of days earlier But I did meet Krzys Trebunia, the eldest son of Trebunia group leader Wladyslow, who lives in Poronin, where Lenin lived plotting revolution, for a couple of years before th First World War The Nimbus recording focuses on more distinctive, traditional Podhale style — high male voices, lots of open fifths, the lead fiddle pla angular lines accompanied by a couple of other vi playing chords and a three stringed cello as bass but The Trebunia Family actually play everything f polkas and waltzes through to their collaborations The Twinkle Brothers and jazz saxophonist Zbignie Namyslowski

Krzysztof is a modern guy — he's studied archite but returned home "so I can see the view of the Ta every morning" He's recently been talking with Malcolm McLaren about future collaborations McL owns a clothing company called Warsaw and, follov last year's *Paris* CD, is considering Poland as the location for his next foray into sonic bricolage

Krzysztof feels gorale music and lyrics can chang "songs about sheep and agriculture don't mean mu to people these days" — but that its characteristic polyphony and scales "and above all the spirituality" should remain The form is not completely frozen, however since working with Twinkle Brother Norm Grant, Krzysztof has found himself playing more on off-beat, for example

I stopped off in Krakow on the way back to Wars and in a Jewish restaurant called Ariel stumbled ac a brilliant Klezmer group called Kroke Accordionist Jerzy Bawol told me the unusual story of the group genesis in the 80s he was studying music at colleg and found himself drawn for no apparent reason to Klezmer music. Eight years ago he formed Kroke because under both Poland's fascist and then communist regimes families had good reason to ke quiet about any Jewish members, his parents only t him two years ago that he was Jewish and that his grandfather had been a Klezmer musician "I guess was in the genes," he says

While filming *Schindler's List* in Krakow, Stephen Spielberg fell in love with the group's music, and lat asked them to perform in Jerusalem for a Survivor concert. For the film Spielberg had turned the old Jewish area near the restaurant into a facsimile of it had been during the war "My father took one loo went pale, and didn't come back until after the film stopped," explains Bawol "But you had the incredib sight of actors dressed as Gestapo and Jews drinkin and singing together in this restaurant."

Someone offered to take me on the *Schindler's L* tour of Auschwitz, but I couldn't face it and got the back to old/new Warsaw A night of Cinzano and Di Polo seemed in order **PETER CULSHAW**

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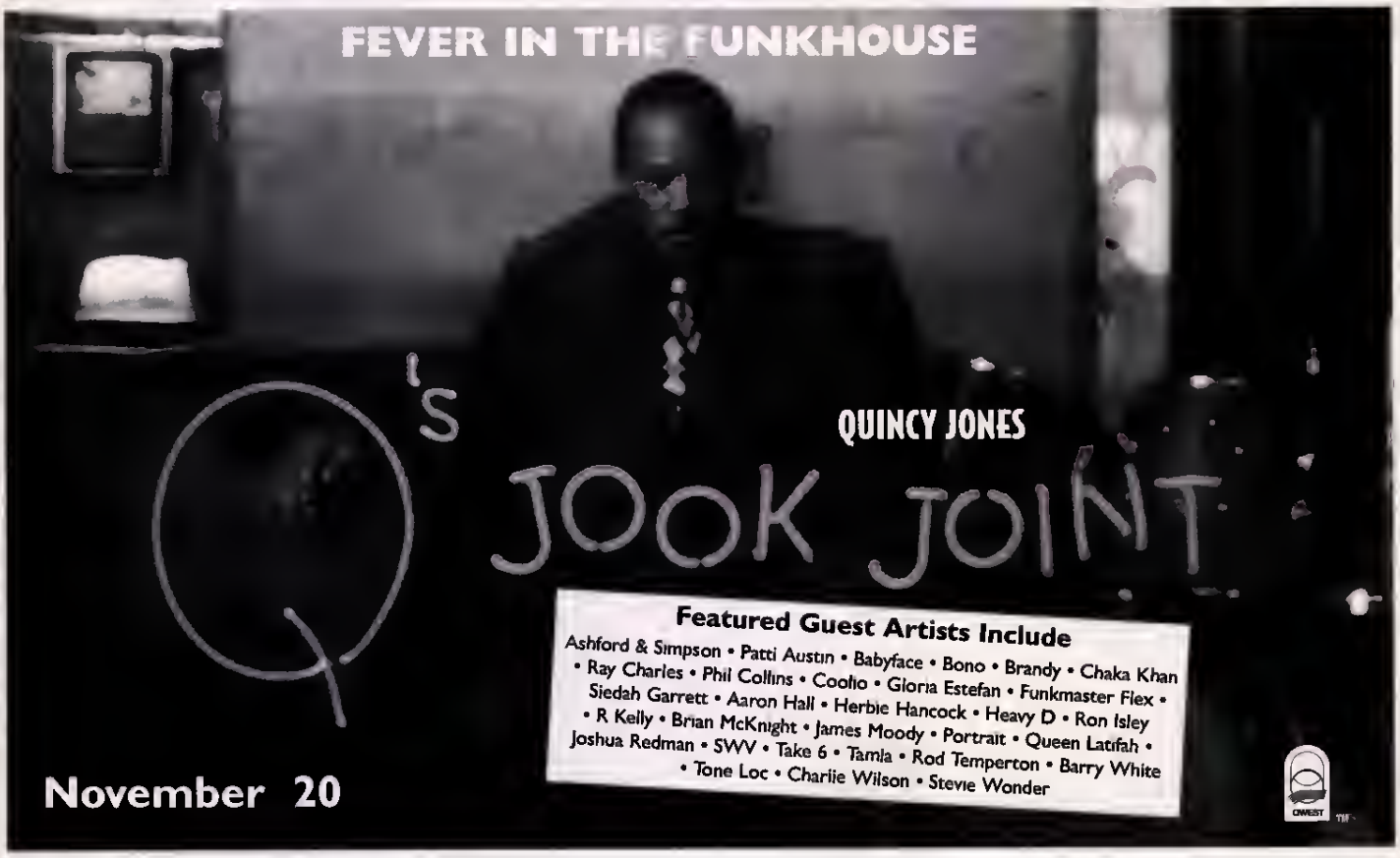

bites

Woob

When I call Woob's Paul Frankland at 3pm, his flatmate tells me that Paul has been up all night recording at home for forthcoming releases under his alter-ego Journeyman, and he's still asleep, so best call back at six. "I work most nights," he admits when we speak later, "less distraction and a better vibe. I've been doing this for years." The notion that maybe Frankland is just one of a thousand bedroom electronics hermits is dispelled by Woob's music, which is an open-to-all-elements Electronica hybrid, and not least because Woob is, unusually for this area, a four-piece unit, a bona fide group.

The group's new release, *Woob 2*, is a multifaceted collection, encompassing subterranean basslines, exotic percussion with guitar and brass, austere atmospheres abstracted to the point of silence, and twitching, steamy landscapes full of avian ululations, amphibian croaks, woodwind and distant chimes. It's a dazzling but coherent mix of the real and sampled.

In 1992 Woob consisted of Frankland alone playing the live instruments, with all sampling initially taken from the TV with a NICAM video recorder. Now the process is quite different.

"Most of the tracks came out of live jams of percussion instruments and crazy sounds and bass and guitar recorded on DAT," he explains. "On 'Creek' we were in a little room with a sampler and one mic. We recorded everything in the room, no matter whether it was an instrument or not.

"The things in the room were more bizarre than you'd get in most rooms. We had a zube tube, which is a kid's toy, and a kid's mic which has a spring in it. We put a real mic into it and whacked it and then got some plastic and started whacking that about and sampled that. We created a rhythm loop out of all those sounds. Then we went back to the studio at home and sampled stuff and arranged it all on Cubase. And then back to the studio again to record it down and put live overdubs on the top as well."

Frankland is keen to emphasise that this is now very much a hands-on group process.

"That seems to be the way things are going at the moment in electronic music. A lot of people want to use live things more and get live instruments back in again rather than just using 909s and 303s and big bass kicks — maybe being a bit more experimental and going back to the roots of music."

Why does he think this is the case?

"I think it's because if you want, say, a bassline, it's best to use the real thing because it's purer. And why use a substitute when you can use the real thing? With Woob, it wants to be more organic sounding and as real as possible — and at the same time as unreal as possible! If you're using all electronic instruments, they've all got that certain sound, if you use a live instrument you get a bigger sound, it gives off a different resonance and gives a bigger picture altogether."

Some of Woob's tracks are long, up to 35 minutes of unfolding drama. Frankland describes them as "like a visual thing, like a mini-film on CD. If there's stuff that could be listened to for a while, why not let the track breathe and go on for as long as it needs to?

"It might also have something to do with the fact that I did a degree in film," he explains. "I did about 20 film soundtracks before I did the Woob album. Hopefully Woob will go in that direction itself with Woob as the soundtrack and Woob as the film — visual things as well as sounds playing off each other at different levels." **MIKE BARNES** Woob 2 *is out now on Emi (through Pinnacle)*

Georg Graewe

Georg Graewe runs a label called Random Acoustics. Based in Cologne, the discs appear in matt cardboard sleeves with elegantly minimal graphics. The busy Stadtgarten venue has made Cologne a centre for New Music, so Graewe's label is in the right place. Some of the label's names are familiar from the worldwide web of improvised music (Radu Malfatti, Gerry Hemingway, Ernst Reijseger), but the consistent high quality of the discs is striking. Random Acoustics avoids both the pennypinching sloppiness and arts board sterility endemic to 'real music' labels. Graewe is also a pianist.

Born in 1956 in Bochum, in the heavily industrialised Ruhr region, Graewe's parents ran a bar — listening to British Forces radio aged six turned him into a Beatles fanatic and guitar player. Hendrix and Cream were the soundtrack to his adolescence, until he discovered free jazz — not that he recognised much difference. "I got very interested, and for me it was not so far from Cream, actually. Not a big step. The sound of that music, of Derek Bailey or Evan Parker, was something that hit me directly."

FMP, the label set up to distribute Peter Brotzmann's legendary *Machine Gun*, released two Graewe Quintet albums in 1977. Since then he has been active making avant garde music that defies the distinction between composition and improvisation.

"In 1980, I founded a large ensemble called The Grubenklang Orchestra. It's connected with the region I come from; it means 'sounds from the pit'. For me, there's no difference between composition and improvisation. You have your ideas, and whether you write them down or play them directly, that's not so much

Tunde Jegede

It is a quirk of musical (not to mention socio-cultural) history that overseas musicians can take on a glamour denied to those based in Britain. But some talent we ignore at our peril. *Lamentation*, a new record released this month, is the work of Tunde Jegede, a Londoner of Nigerian and British parentage who is equally at home with the cello as with West African instruments such as the kora and balafon.

At 23, Jegede combines a refreshing breadth of outlook with a narrower focus to expand and develop the notion of African classical music. The music on *Lamentation* brings together cello compositions — played by Jegede and joined on some tracks by The London Sinfonietta — and melodies that set the cello against the broader range of African instruments.

The mix works well, although it's not Jegede's first joint venture: apart from a cassette of solo kora music, *Malian Royal Court Music*, he has worked with such stalwarts of the world fusion circuit as Nana Vasconcelos, Orphy Robinson, Trilok Gurtu and Irish composer Micheal O'Suilleabhain.

Behind such meetings is a musician keen to expand our ideas of African music. "When I say African classical music people say: 'Oh, you mean mixing African music with Western classical.'" This is a common misapprehension. Over the past ten years, Jegede has been studying the Malian courtly tradition and its links back to ancient Egypt, the wellspring of African classicism.

Aged seven, Jegede took up cello and, under the auspices of the Senegalese musician Bouly Cissoko, the kora. In 1982, aged ten, he travelled to The Gambia to continue his studies with kora master Amadu Bansang Jobarteh.

These experiences have given Jegede a broad canvas to draw on. Although well-versed in the kora tradition, he is enthusiastic about new material and fresh sounds, among them the (relatively) polyglot styles of Guinea's Jali Musa Jawara and his chart-busting brother Mory Kante. "Amadu is miles away from that," he says referring to his former teacher. "It's music to sit down and listen to. He doesn't compromise. He's not reaching out. He stands for tradition."

Jegede is uneasy with the pigeonholing of artists and styles. He rejects any notion that he is creating fusion or crossover: the music grows out of his own experiences and feelings. "I don't see music in terms of genre," he says, "I see it in terms of sound. The sentiment behind the music is important, not the genre."

On the question of collaboration between artists, he advises caution. "In general, very few combinations work better than the originals. [But] it depends who instigates it. Most collaborations are more for the public or the media or the record companies. But when it's the musicians who fancy getting together, it's a different matter."

Among other recent projects, Jegede has been playing kora and cello on an album produced by Paul Gladstone-Reid. Reid's career is interesting in itself. In the mid-80s he was a pianist and enigmatic figure on the fringes of the new wave of British jazz. In the 90s he reinvented himself as a UK response to such sophisticated American soul singers as Oran 'Juice' Jones and Tashan. Now Reid is Jegede's partner in The Axiom Foundation: not an offshoot of the Bill Laswell empire, but an attempt to create a framework for the dissemination of the duo's notions of a UK-based, African-derived black art music.

Jegede tells me he has been approached about a dance mix of "Heat Haze", from *Lamentation*, which he said no to. "If I did it, I'd do it from scratch," he says. "The thing is to be as independent as possible and to keep artistic control." **CHRIS STAPLETON** *Lamentation is out now on Triciom (through New Note)*

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of a difference, I think, because it's all about sounds and the ideas that are going on in your head. There's a tradition of that — people like Mozart and Beethoven were great improvisors. Some of the stuff that Mozart published was written down improvisations. He would write them down afterwards — because there were no CDs, I guess. He had to go to market, to sell something, and writing them down was the method at that time."

Graewe is critical of the mechanical manner in which new scores are performed in the classical world, with inadequate rehearsal time and musicians who play the dots rather than realising a composer's intentions.

"If you play jazz saxophone or trumpet, everything you play has to *sound* — with a lot of the classical players, they just hit the right notes, mostly at the right time, but they don't try and make it sound."

Graewe's own performances have the keen awareness of the moment that connects free improvisation to the blues. He reveals that the name of his label is not so much a nod to John Cage's philosophy of chance, as a decision to use the practicalities of performance as a stimulus.

"The name of the label derives fr[illegible] that musicians encounter different a[illegible]stics all the time, you have to deal with them if you're not going to get frustrated. I get different pianos all the time, and different acoustics, every room I get in, and this is part of the work — you have to make it *sound*. You need access to different techniques to make it sound. You can't complain and just try to get the same sound all the time, that's stupid. Any instrument has its own values, sometimes old fucked up pianos have some hidden charms, you just have to get them out." **BEN WATSON** *Random Acoustics is distributed in the UK by Impetus*

Samm Bennett

Samm Bennett can seem a vast bundle of contradictions He's a drummer who's "a little tired of the trap set per se It has its place, but I think it's taken over far too much space in the overall landscape of music so many more possibilities will present themselves as a result of playing on percussion instruments besides the trap set" The 38 year old member of New York's Knitting Factory caucus has made three CDs that make a pop allegiance clear, with one (un-ironic) Beatle or ex-Beatle cover per album On those records Bennett is basically a singer-songwriter, yet says, "I'm not interested in chord progressions I think it's kind of spent." Instead, he builds much of his music around sampling "I've been using a sampler since about 1989, and with very rare exception I've never used any sample that anyone could identify"

If the new self-titled album by Bennett's History Of The Last Five Minutes (a studio duo with guitarist Hahn Rowe) seems ready to fly off in contradictory directions, it somehow coheres into a singular style built around sonic sculptures analogous to the improvised constructions that appear on the CD's cover Similar are 1991's *Life Of Crime* and *The Big Off* (1993), the latter recorded with an all-star KnitFac cast.

Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, Bennett left there in 1977 for Boston and came to New York in 84 "I've been a Beatles fan since I was about seven," he says. "I had the same upbringing as any red-blooded American kid I was playing in rock bands in high school, playing a drum set. The avant garde, ironically, can be incredibly dogmatic about what they will accept. I remember doing free improvised gigs with people who'd turn three shades of blue if you played a groove."

His distinctive sampling focuses on "the properties things have when you sample a sound and move it way up or way down the keyboard and completely transform it into something unrecognisable" As for his chord progression-less songwriting, he says, "I think about guys in Kenya or Zimbabwe plucking on an mbira or something, some kind of pattern over and over and singing a song on top of it. Or traditional Japanese stuff, with just the sparest of shamisen accompaniment and the little flute laying up there but it's a song When you look at the wider musical culture of the world, there is so much song work that's not based on Western songwriters"

Bennett also draws inspiration from "mountain music, Appalachian music, real old-time, hardcore stuff where the guys are riffing on one chord on a banjo, singing some modal melody over it. It doesn't have that much harmonic shift to it, but it's some of the most powerful stuff I know"

It seems perfectly logical to Bennett that his latest project combines Appalachian and traditional Japanese music "The shamisen is so much like the banjo, and the aesthetic of the vocal is so oddly similar You think of them as incredibly alien, and yet there's these weird points at which they intersect, and it works perfectly" Ultimately, bringing an avant garde view of sound into the song-based pop world may be just the thing to break the current stranglehold of retro-style recycling **STEVE NOLTJE** History Of The Last Five Minutes *is out now on Knitting Factory (through Cargo)*

VOTBM

"We're in the woods in the middle of nowhere the studio, the office, the warehouse There's a community to a certain extent a lot of old hippies and freaks live here There are worse parts in the world"

Ulli Rattay's description of the headquarters of the German CMP label, located due west of Cologne on the way to the Belgian border, sounds idyllic the perfect environment, perhaps, for creating music free from urban or economic pressures

When he's not working in CMP's A&R department, Ulli plays "guitar, prepared instruments, soundwaves and treatments" in Victory Of The Better Man (VOTBM) The group are virtually unknown outside of Germany, but no matter the music of this five-strong collective floats across stylistic borders in a manner that makes geography irrelevant.

The group have recorded two albums for CMP 1991's *L'Utopiste* and *wegen Brot* , released earlier this year European critics fell over themselves searching for parallels to the group's approach the most perceptive alighted upon David Sylvian's solo recordings, Bowie's *Low*, Fred Frith's *Step Across The Border*, all of which contain music that hums with diffuse life but which refuses to lend itself to reductive analysis

"We all grew up with progressive 70s music," says Ulli, adding a parallel of his own "Zappa, Henry Cow and the few examples from Germany which had a special uniqueness Can, Faust. In their choice of instruments and their use of language, a group like Can was not a bad copy of an Anglo-American group It had influences from there but it added a certain Teutonic aspect."

VOTBM's music is not Teutonic, but it shares some of the deadpan, absurdist atmosphere that the Krautrock groups brought to an Anglo-American rock blueprint This is manifest in the contributions of vocalist and "random generator" Harald Bernhard

"[He] has the ability to sing a lot of languages that he does not speak," explains Ulli, "so he can sound French, Italian, American, English Sometimes he creates words. It's like a journey through language Sometimes meaning emerges, sometimes it's gone just like the music has gone, moving into abstraction, lost the groove, just tumbling It leaves room for the listener to discover their own meaning For us it's a kind of humour"

According to Ulli the group's music emerges gradually out of open-ended collective improvisations, fragments of song, the use of 'little' instruments, found sounds and texts, all transfigured via extensive studio processing.

"The mixture of characters creates this kind of music," he says "We've worked together now for over ten years there's a strong personal relationship, and a kind of safety in that you are accepted in the way you are This is a good home We don't have to explain ourselves anymore, we can just play, as soon as you have to explain why you are doing something you lose the tension of the moment." **TONY NERRINGTON**

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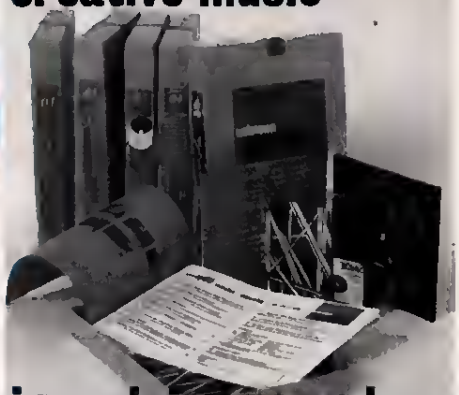

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creative music quarterly

Emergency Broadcast Network present themselves as multimedia pranksters, debunking the myths of the information age. But are they any good? Interview by Peter Shapiro

T.V. O.D.

Providence, Rhode Island is an odd combination of a university town and a decrepit manufacturing centre — sort of Norwich meets Walsall. Basic two-up/two-down houses with aluminium sidings give way to mock-Oxford quadrangles which, in turn, buttress disused industrial bunkers. Inside one of these anonymous, burnt-out buildings is the headquarters of art-terrorist-prankster troupe Emergency Broadcast Network.

Perhaps familiar from their doctored video of George Bush covering Queen's "We Will Rock You" that opened U2's *Zoo TV* tour, EBN's music combines Laurie Anderson's multimedia fixation with Negativland's perverse sense of humour and Consolidated's spartan, militant rigour. Reflecting their main interest in demystifying television, EBN's vision of cut 'n' paste is a disconcerting combination of influences, not necessarily because of the radical politics involved, but rather that the resulting sonic and visual collages are so contradictory and disorientating.

Fitting in neatly alongside groups like Gang Of Four and the Bomb Squad-produced Public Enemy, EBN's overwhelming barrage of hyper HipHop beats and martial basslines retools funk as a sexless, bodiless carrier of value-free images and signs. On the fearsome track "3.7.8", a saintly contralto voice jostles for space with a rapid-fire breakbeat, a bouncing acoustic bassline and the kinetic dynamics of a distorted voice screaming, "*Rock, rock, rock that shit*."

Their taste for bizarre musical juxtapositions is an outgrowth of the art school training of founding members Joshua Pearson and Gardner Post. As students at Rhode Island School of Design (the same institution that gave the world Talking Heads), they formed Pearson Post Industries, a multimedia installation group specialising in interactive video displays, 'seminars' and the creation of new technology like The Golf Bag Launcher, a rocket launcher housed in a golf bag to protect "politicians, executives and other VIPs who spend large amounts of time on difficult-to-protect golf courses."

"Our primary interest in the media was the non-stop stream of images from everything and everywhere beaming into people's homes," Pearson says, describing the route from traditional art school disciplines like painting and sculpture to his current brand of politicised technological mayhem. "One of our early inspirations was this television series called *War And Peace In The Nuclear Age*. We ended up doing basically what we do now with this series. We took a lot of talking heads like Bob McNamara, George Schultz [former US Secretaries of State] and made them say interesting and strange little things. The idea was to compress this ten-part, ten-hour series with a very serious subject matter into a frivolous entertainment product."

Pearson and Post founded EBN during the Gulf War as a way of exploring their fascination with both military technology and the pernicious hyperreality of television. Their first release, 1992's *Commercial Entertainment Product* video, contains the aforementioned George Bush clip, a mock advert for their Golf Bag Launcher and a stoopid parody of LA Style's Stateside Techno hit "James Brown Is Dead", called "Lawrence Welk Is Dead".

Other past EBN projects have included the Emergency Broadcast Vehicle, a monstrous Chevrolet Impala station wagon that has been painted white and fitted with video screens and a satellite dish in a mock-up of a television news van, and the centrepiece of their live show, the Telepodium. The Telepodium, a dais with rotating video monitors and assaulting lights on either side, is three parts presidential podium, one part bazooka launcher and one part teleprompter. "It's the idea that television can be a weapon," Pearson says. "Politics are no longer any different than entertainment."

If all this sounds like a technologically enhanced rejuvenation of the summer of 68 or deconstruction with a phat beat, you'd be right, almost. Pearson claims, "I wasn't aware of the Situationists until I read [breaks into smarmy, game show announcer's voice] *Lipstick Traces* and then I knew all about them thanks to Greil Marcus. But there's definitely a continuation of what they were doing with the cut-up thing. Collage is a timeless art."

Their latest release, the *Telecommunication Breakdown* CD-ROM, is indeed a classic piece of deconstructive surgery: talking heads like William Shatner and motivational guru Tony Robins flash by in a blur of information overload and Harrison Ford sings along with a Kool & The Gang sample on "Get Down". With production by Meat Beat Manifesto's Jack Dangers, the music on *Telecommunication Breakdown* is more fully realised than on their previous "Behaviour Modification" EP, while the video portion is less sophomoric and more brutal.

Bill Laswell, who brought in Melle Mel from The Furious Five to rap on his remix of the exquisitely confrontational "Shoot the Mac-1D", and Brian Eno were also enlisted to flesh out the slightly skeletal soundscapes. "[Eno] was intending on doing a bunch of passes and then editing them together digitally," Pearson says about the editing process. "His computer broke, so he actually sent us the straight passes on a DAT. We remixed his remix. Obviously, we are heavily influenced by his approach to making music. We've read about the tarot card stuff and randomness. We're kind of approaching music from a similar line with video."

Since they make music by cutting and pasting snippets of video and vice-versa, *Telecommunication Breakdown* is a whirlwind of contradictions, a scathing satire of television and a self-serving infomercial for the band. It is a dense work of Luddite theory, yet it is also a tour de force of computer wizardry. The beats combine the sinuous funk of HipHop with the muscular pulse of the new school of Chicago House trax, but the technological rigidity of the context strips away any veneer of pleasure. *Breakdown* damns, and is damned by, the technological apparatus that it seeks to critique.

"We're giving people an antidote," Pearson explains. "By giving people an overdose, or at least an extremely high dosage of TV and video to numb them to it, maybe they won't watch as much. Well, I don't really mean 'numb', maybe distress them, over-stimulate them."

Telecommunication Breakdown *is available from TVT Records, 23 East 4th Street, New York, NY 10003, USA*

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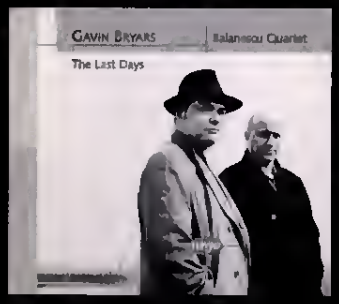

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soul mining

In the 1960s, **John Tchicai** was one of the undersung heroes revolutionising black music. Now he's back with his own take on 90s world fusion. Profile by Barry Witherden

PHOTO NICK WHITE

When John Coltrane's raw, turbulent free jazz assault course *Ascension* was released in 1965, the contribution made by altoist John Tchicai provoked much dispute. For some he threaded a thin strand of coherence through an insane experiment; for others he was the man standing in the doorway of the kitchen, daunted by the heat.

A year earlier, similar controversies had arisen over The New York Art Quartet. Somewhat sidelined by official histories, the short-lived NYAQ remains one of the most important units in improvised music. Its relative neglect by critics and the general public may be because it allegedly represented the cool face of free jazz, out of step with the mainstream energy music.

Neither Tchicai nor his NYAQ colleagues (Roswell Rudd, Lewis Worrell, Milford Graves) were too timid to embrace the revolution: they could be fierce and fiery when they chose. Nor were they closet counter-revolutionaries, biding their time before bringing jazz back to more secure territory. Crucial innovators, they indicated several potential new roads, one of the most influential of which would be travelled by the Chicago school of soundwrights.

What was always really unnerving about Tchicai's approach was its genuine democracy. Shunning the arm-wrestling, swill-it-down-and-spew-it-out machismo which frequently passes for adventurousness, the challenge that his music issues to his co-performers, his audience and, indeed, himself, concerns self-development. Non-adversarial, it still challenged participants (performers *and* audiences) to engage in debate with it.

Tchicai was born in 1936 in Copenhagen of Danish-Congolese parentage. After studying in Aarhus he moved back to Copenhagen where, in 1962, he met Albert Ayler. Later, in Helsinki, he encountered Archie Shepp and Bill Dixon. With their encouragement he moved to New York in 1963 and joined Dixon's band, then formed The New York Contemporary Five with Shepp, Dixon, Don Moore and JC Moses. Returning to New York after touring Europe with The NYCS, he founded The NYAQ.

In 1965, after jamming with Coltrane, he was invited to play on *Ascension*, which was, perhaps, the energy music session to end them all. "I was looking for the sources of that kind of intensity," Tchicai told me, "searching in several ways, through the study of yoga, both the breathing techniques and the philosophy, looking for the core of where that orgiastic intensity came from. You can find intensity in different ways, not just through that kind of cacophonous method. Coltrane knew that religiousness was needed as the basis of the music."

In 1966 he went home again and led the magnificent Cadentia Nova Danica. Then, for most observers, he disappeared from view for a quarter of a century. While people were looking the other way he was, in fact, keeping pretty busy. In the mid-70s he rarely performed in public, concentrating on teaching music and studying yoga, although there were some notable collaborations with The Strange Brothers and Johnny Dyani. By the end of the 70s he was revving up his performing career again.

The recordings Tchicai has made over the last decade are compelling and varied, but there were important personal milestones too. He mentioned meeting his wife Margriet in Rotterdam in 1989, getting a lifetime grant from the Danish state in 1990 (he was the first jazz musician to receive such a stipend), seeing his two daughters grow up (they're now 12 and nine), changing home base from Denmark to California in August 1991, becoming aware of yoga master BKS Iyengar and getting acquainted with Danish painter Anders Kirkegaard.

The last two were particularly illuminating: spiritual components have always been strong in Tchicai's music, and one can see why he impressed Coltrane. Was this why they gravitated together? "Consciously our connection was only musical," he says, "but it's possible that unconsciously we were both directed on the same paths and were pulled together through that." Tchicai is also a painter of vibrant, iconographic, African-tinged canvases which echo the quality of his saxophone playing and his compositions. I recalled Amira Baraka's comment that Tchicai's playing "reminds one of Mondrian's geometrical decisions, or lyrical syllogisms". Since late 1991 his principal group has been The Archetypes, though he has been involved in a dazzling parade of other ventures and plays regularly as a guest with many Bay Area groups.

The Archetypes comprise his wife, Dutch pianist Margriet Naber, and five young local musicians (two guitars, electric bass, congas and drums) recruited through an ad on a music shop wall. They cover the genre waterfront. "The music we play is a kind of global fusion, a mixture of jazz, rock, African and other influences," Tchicai explains, which is an accurate if rather dry account of the group's seamless and organic mix.

Their debut CD *Love Is Touching* (reviewed in *The Wire* 141) was recorded nearly two years ago. "Since then we've been doing regular gigs. In the summer we toured Germany, and did a session for Nord Deutsche Rundfunk." In concert there is a strong theatrical element (recalling the ceremonial side of Cadentia Nova Danica) which, perforce, the studio recordings largely ignore.

The album, though very contemporary in sound, draws together elements from most of his earlier work. "Yes, it was meant to develop concerns that I have been working on for many years." The Archetypes function as a co-operative, which sounds like a throwback to the kind of idealistic democracy pursued by The NYAQ.

"Yes, we work in that way. Everyone makes a contribution of equal value. It comes closer to a religious and social kind of experience. It doesn't matter how good or famous an individual member of the band is. It's more important to see things from the point of view of individual souls and how they can contribute and fit into the whole in terms of philosophy and religion. There's not much verbal conversation, but musically everyone contributes, and beneath the musical level everyone is supportive, with great honesty and the will to make things work." □ Love Is Touching *is out now on B&W (through New Note)*

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In 1995, **Electronica** has become a nanotechnology, refrying the atoms of other musics into strange new hybrids. In the process, a lattice of invisible, interconnected networks has emerged to link disparate but like-minded musicians, labels and festivals. Rob Young maps the co-ordinates of the new urban music

worlds collide

At the Sonar Festival in Barcelona, June 1995, I was approached by a slightly built, gaunt-faced man who introduced himself in an American accent "Hi, I'm Mark Cunningham," he said "From Mars." He wasn't, as it turned out, a benign extraterrestrial beamed to Earth from the popular red planet, but the ex-trumpeter with the 70s New York No Wavers who blew, scraped and snarled themselves some of the way there, imploding before their trajectory could be detected He splashed down in Catalunya, hooked up with Barcelona's Industrial/experimental music scene, started blowing his horn through a MIDI backline, and released an excellent CD, *Adios Jupiter*, as Raeo, which hasn't made it outside the Spanish borders yet.

This is not his story But it indicates how electronic music is becoming an embarcation point for musicians previously thought to have somehow missed their ship, whose work was too new or futuristic or resistant to common understanding or just too *out* to be acceptable

Take a map, pick a large conurbation *listen* to the city People barely out of their teens and elders languishing in cult obscurity are emerging from their respective hinterlands and fusing together to make music, and in the heat-exchange, the new technologies embraced by the post-rave generation are etching out a dispersed and unconnected network of experimental, unconventional and general square-peg musicians from the last ten, 20 years and more

For evidence, look no further than festivals such as Sonar or Vienna's Phonotaktik, or an event such as *The Wire*-sponsored Transgressions, two of which debuted this year (Phonotaktik in October, Transgressions last month) All these events deliberately tried to unlock live and electronic musics from their segregated status in clubs, pubs or concert venues To hear Jorge Reyes on the same stage as Scanner (Sonar), David Toop and Max Eastley shortly before Patrick Pulsinger (Phonotaktik), or improvising cellist Frances-Marie Uitti next to drum 'n' bass pioneer Alex Reece (Transgressions) provided often revelatory experiences, and the audiences' reactions showed that such seemingly disparate musics can circulate successfully in spaces that aren't shackled by 'ideology' There was also an impulse towards other artforms Sonar took place in Barcelona's Centre for Contemporary Art, Phonotaktik was loosely connected to a Viennese festival of modern architecture, Transgressions featured video, art and installation work, some created by the musicians themselves

Less fleeting evidence of the existence of invisible but dynamic conduits is contained within *Collaborations*, a new compilation released this month on Lo Recordings It's an incestuous album of specially recorded joint projects by 12 unlikely but mostly successful twinnings including Paul Schütze and Lol Coxhill, David Toop and Daniel Pemberton (the former 30 years older than the latter), MLO and Pere Ubu's David Thomas, Scanner and sound artist/producer David Cunningham, and Funki Porcini and The Mike Flowers Pops Orchestra There are also contributions from Bedouin Ascent, Luke Vibert/Wagon Christ, Boymerang, Voafose (aka Jeremy Simmons, who released the *Wiers* album with Vibert on Rephlex last year), Jamois and Chant, and Tony Wilson (aka Zunch and The Occupiers, a contributor to Leaf Records's "Invisible Soundtracks" EP series) It's a brilliant, possibly unrepeatable document, full of mangled shapes, hyperactive drum 'n' bass, fertile crevices of noise the intrusive ambience of the modern city

This is the new urban music. Futurist sampladelia is a nanotechnology, refrying the atoms of other musics If the rumblings of records such as Main's *Firmament*, Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works II* or Lull's *Cold Summer* represent last year's impulse to dissolve music into a primordial soup, then the music on Lo Recordings or Tony Thorpe's Language label represents the first blooms of exotic flora in an unmapped new world

Don't call it Ambient, because most of this stuff travels at hypervelocities and staggering gaits hardly explicable/believable in ballistic/osteopathic terms Don't call it dance music, because anyone making music designed only for the dancefloor right now inevitably sounds closed-off 'dance' having somehow come down to mean, in the space of ten years, those regular, heartbeat-upping 4/4 kicks or TripHop's spongy half-speed headnod Don't call it Techno either, because much of the music that follows replaces electronic preset sounds, timbres and rhythms with sampled

ILLUSTRATION PHIL ASHCROFT

Jon Tye

David Cunningham

instruments played in real time, technology not utilised as an end in itself but as a window on fantasy combinations of instruments and dream coalitions of musicians, unrecognisable noises in consumable form (someone once said you can sell any old sugary industrial by-product by coating it in chocolate) And finally, don't call it avant garde, because most of the younger artists in this orbit don't hear the difference, while the older ones have already had a bash and hit brick walls

Techno discourse has focused on the anonymity it offers to its creators and the flux it sets up between producer/DJ and listener, celebrated in statements such as "Each record is a crowd" (from a *TechNet* bulletin, 1995) That aesthetic is increasingly devolving into music which we can still (just about) call dancefloor Techno on the one hand the metal enjambements of Russ Gabriel, Mark Broom and the A13, Force Inc and Basic Channel labels, and the Goa Trance caravan on the other, which attempts to derive political-spiritual significance from Techno by grafting high-octane ritual beats onto the ley-line trail East

Yet post-rave Electronica is re-installing a kind of auteur aesthetic This year has been characterised by a large number of artists 'finding a voice' the goofing, world-owes-me-a-livin' beats of Wagon Christ and Vibert's death-defying Plug drum 'n' bass 12"s, µ-Ziq's funky liquidiser beatboxes, Autechre's injection of hardcore energy into pure electronics, Scanner's tone-dialling *Merzbau*, Boymerang's 'systems Jungle', Panasonic's untouchable frequencies, Paul Schütze's fusion-piano drift over hazed, liquid interiors, Techno Animal's intricate studio bombast; Mouse On Mars's digital tropicana, Oval's skipping digits

Graham Sutton is a typical example of a musician who became disenchanted with the limitations of rock instrumentation After releasing the Bark Psychosis album *Hex* in early 1994, and playing a final few gigs (by which time drummer Mark Simnett was being asked to replicate Jungle breaks at speed on his kit), Sutton metamorphosed into Boymerang, releasing several singles on Tony Morley and Julian Carrera's Leaf imprint "The band disintegrated because I was getting into using samplers anyway," he explains "We used to sample a little bit, but never as an intrinsic part, which always annoyed me, because I wanted to get into that more But as you say, I reached an impasse in how much further you could take it in that direction I wanted to make things a bit tougher as well And if you've got a drummer, it restricts what you do straight away There was a [Bark Psychosis] B-side which was trying to do drum 'n' bass with the drums, but it's pointless you've got to get stuck in and get your hands dirty, make some tough decisions, which is hard if you've been working for a few years It's hard for a drummer to take So in that sense it's been quite difficult."

For the forthcoming Boymerang album on the new EMI subsidiary Regal, Sutton hopes to allay his dissatisfaction with available source samples by inviting 'real' musicians down to the studio in order to sample their unique sounds "A trumpet player called Del Crabtree, a vibraphone player, double bass player, all friends I want to use people that I know rather than take them off records Lee Harris [drummer with Orang and Talk Talk] is going to record me some breaks I know I'm going to have unique stuff to play with rather than what everyone else has got. I want to try and get something to sound as distinctive as possible without it sounding up its own arse"

Apart from the well established, lucrative exchanges between classical orchestras, conductors and soloists, the only comparable situation in recent memory has been the interconnectedness of the jazz and improvised music world in the 1970s (look at the recurring names eddying over records released on the outwardly 'incompatible' ECM, Incus and FMP labels, for example)

However, the British jazz scene accumulated its own particular

PHOTO OF JON TYE IRIS GARRELFS

set of problems, especially its tendency to conduct its business in private — small gatherings passed on by word of mouth, occult and unglamorous jams in the upstairs rooms of inner city pubs, crippling political anxieties. "I went to see Lol Coxhill once," remembers Jon Tye, "in a local pub in Hackney. I thought, Lol Coxhill, that might be quite interesting. I went up there, there's two people, bearded and with big coats on. the music might have been great, but just because of the environment, there was no way I was going to stay up there."

In 1987 Jon was composing theme tunes for Channel 4 and making House tracks for Gee Street; then a colleague arrived back from the States with a pile of new 12"s from Detroit and Chicago. From that revelatory moment his career vectored through post-rave Ambient with his partner Pete Smith in MLO, but was frustrated by his record company's lack of commitment to longer-term ideas. Lo, the label he formed as a result, still only two compilations and an EP old, is a jump at self-reliance. "I think things now can really mix up and be very attractive and cutting edge, *and* experimental — that doesn't have to mean 'no women allowed'."

In the mediated rush at the end of the century to ossify cultural producers into iconic form (ready for immortalisation on CD-ROM), the central factor of 21st century aesthetics is being ignored. The most forward-looking labels, as with any industry or business, are those that are shifting the recording process closer to the point and moment of distribution. Small labels such as Swim (founded by another musician whose career foundered during the 80s, Wire's Colin Newman) or Austria's Mego are self-contained production facilities and A&R sources. Mego's abandoned industrial unit on the outskirts of Vienna is a model HQ, with open-plan living space adjoining a fully equipped MIDI studio and separate computer area where they monitor their Internet homepage, which includes possibly the first fully interactive on-line sequencer. Viewers can create a rhythm loop and e-mail it back to the label for use on a Mego recording, or keep the sound file for their own use, the label are trying to expand the site's sound capacity into a full-blown virtual studio.

Like his former Wire colleagues Bruce Gilbert and Graham Lewis (the former now resident DJ at Blast First's Disobey club, the latter recording idiosyncratic Euro-Techno under the name Halo), Colin Newman has been galvanised by Electronica's shift away from the attendant baggage of personality. "Since music has become more electronicised," he says, "as you work, you are involved in an act of choosing, rather than in conventional playing where it's done in a slightly different way. If you work with sequencers, it's a matter of choosing which elements you want, and which you don't. And you can apply that right up the line: to making music, to production of another group, and also to a record label.

"It was liberating for us. If you can imagine the kind of musical generation where I started with Wire, you had to go in a very expensive studio to make a proper record, and by the time you'd finished that, you were already well in debt before you'd even sold one record. And that's the difference: the financial thing can't be ignored, the fact that you can put records out cheaply, and don't have to sell so many in order to make a profit. Which means records can be more adventurous: they don't have to sell."

This year especially, the tentacles of labels, festivals and artists have been interlinking across continents at a furious rate: from Reflective in San Francisco, and Astralwerks and Asphodel in New York, to Sublime and Ryoji Ikeda's CCI imprint in Tokyo, down to countless European outfits, most notably Mille Plateaux in Germany, Cheap and Mego in Austria, and scores of UK contacts.

The ecology is delicately balanced: on one level, the prominent rise last year of James Lavelle's Mo' Wax label seemed to accelerate a gigantic warm weather front which swept across the chilled tundra of Techno — note how such artists as Wagon Christ, µ-Ziq and Aphex have incorporated 'warm' drum sounds, 'natural' textures and HipHop or hardcore breaks into the overall fabric, where last year they were sounding like the Zanussi factory.

On another level, the flexible and open-ended culture that surrounds the new electronic music has enabled a number of musicians to come in from the cold of institutionalised electroacoustic experimentation. A prime example is American mutantrumpeter Ben Neill (a long term collaborator with Nicolas Collins, curator of Amsterdam's sound research centre STEIM, which functions like an open-access antidote to Pierre Boulez's impenetrable IRCAM organisation). Neill's new Astralwerks album *Green Machine* extends his already considerable enquiries into the manipulation and processing of electronic sound, but it carries with it a 12" EP containing a reconstructive TripHop remix by DJ Spooky.

The music that arises out of such meetings isn't always brilliant, but that's only half the point: the sensation of signals being transmitted across great distances to benign receptors is palpable and invigorating. The result has been a hothouse in ferment, with some surprising offshoots. Jon Hassell appears on Techno Animal's *Re-Entry* album, while Paul Schutze has lined up a recording session with trombonist Julien Priester. The musical ecosystem has proved highly susceptible to viruses from outside — note the way drum 'n' bass latched parasitically onto so many tracks this year.

"I'm astounded at how good it is," says Graham Sutton, who was one of the first to bring drum 'n' bass across from the exclusive domain of the hardcore dancefloor into an aesthetic informed more by freeform rock. "Politically and socially it sums up so many different things for me: how you live your life, how you deal with people. I've always been into urban stuff. I've expressed that in different ways, but I've always been drawn to that side of things: looking around you, magical realism. But also the multicultural aspect of it; I think it's the most amazing thing to have happened to this country in a long while. To get different groups of people together: it doesn't matter what colour you are, it's not a black thing, it's not a white thing." He laughs at the simplicity of it. "It's just people who know what it's about; that's all that defines people who are into it."

> **"Electronic music is becoming an embarcation point for musicians whose work used to be too new or futuristic or resistant to common understanding to be acceptable"**

For the title of their new remix compilation, Global Communication coined the word 'remotion', which is a good way of describing the new aesthetic that is taking shape around sample-based Electronica. The popular view is of cold, unfeeling music, an archaic notion born of the overemphasis in jazz, classical, rock and pop on conventional displays of 'emotion' through physical gestures — you have to attack a

Graham Sutton

Colin Newman as Immersion

guitar to get an unusual sound out of it, but samplers are devices born to distort.

Jon Tye cites a German prototype as a prime influence. "Krautrock wasn't at all cold, yet it used electronics. Those bands weren't really live bands as such — Can played live, but worked out their ideas in the studio. But a lot of jazz stuff — Miles Davis, even "The Sidewinder", was put together with splicing."

For a precedent, go to the photo adorning the sleeve of *Rolf And Florian*, the third Kraftwerk LP by Ralf Hutter and Florian Schneider. Although Kraftwerk went on to become archetypes of aloof, robotic minimal-pop, their roots were in this neon-lit basement full of oddly interfaced instruments, sawn-off Moogs, homemade guitars, all carrying the prospect of open-ended improvisation. The image is oddly tranquil: both musicians sitting comfortably, balanced and relaxed amid the chaos of wires and exotic components. One thing's for sure: the music they're about to make is going to be headtrip rather than bodyrock.

"For the first time ever," says Jon Tye, "sequenced music is getting more varied. Previously it was programmed for particular moods, and people would go to that particular club when they wanted that mood: chill out, or whatever..."

Tye's *Collaborations* swings the mood all by itself: from the plaintive vocal on the opening "St Christopher's Dream" by Ragga & The Pylon King, through the MLO/Bedouin Ascent/Luke Vibert mix of "Ruff Dog", which replaces drum 'n' bass's metallic snares with slappy brush-drums and double bass. On "Vermillion Sands", Lol Coxhill's ghostly, muted sax adds voice and focus to Paul Schutze's sprawling synthwash. David Thomas mutters nervously over MLO's "Fish Shack" loop. David Cunningham's tape treatments add an extra mesh of interference patterns over Robin Rimbaud's telephonic net. How much of this generational overlap was down to chance?

"The whole idea was that people would get something out of doing it, aside from money," Jon explains. "I organised the session with Luke and Bis, I put David Toop and Bis together, which was great because Bis said he actually had David's album [*New And Rediscovered Musical Instruments*] when he was at school. He was thought to be really weird to be seen carrying it round, when everyone else was into AC/DC. And Mike Flowers Pops/Funki, and Lol and Paul, David [Toop] and Daniel [Pemberton] I put together, David Thomas I got in contact with, for Scanner and David Cunningham, I met David and he was totally unaware of all that was going on. All he'd heard was [Toop and Max Eastley's] *Buried Dreams* album, the rest of it he was totally oblivious to. It seemed ridiculous, because he was such a big influence on a lot of people. I mentioned him to Scanner, and he said, 'I've got all his albums!' Then I gave a CD of Scanner to David Cunningham, and he was like, 'Oh, this is good'. He's very critical, he doesn't like a lot of stuff, so that was part of the challenge, to try and think what would be a good combination, the people that would enjoy working together and would get something out of it. On a musical basis, Paul Schutze has since been talking about doing a whole album with Lol Coxhill. I thought Lol actually added a lot of elements to Paul's music that were missing, his stuff is very precise, and Lol is totally opposite. I gave [Lol] a cassette of the tune, but he was so busy that when he turned up to do the tune he hadn't listened to it at all, but it didn't matter, he was so into improvising, he just played."

And that close encounter with David Thomas? "It was fantastic working with him. He came down the studio and I played loads of loops, and we spent a couple of weeks just jamming and taking loops: seven two-hour DATs with all these loops of all of us playing live, me and Pete... I got him to pick something to work to, and he wrote the "Fish Shack" thing, sent us that on DAT, we put the track round it, sent it to him, he came down the studio with a lot of beer and crisps, and just sat on the sofa going, 'OK, this is OK, I can get into this, just drinkin' beer and eatin' crisps, this is cool,' and just suggested a few things. I'd like to hear the new Ubu album, but I got the feeling that this is more the area that he should be working in."

David Cunningham, who charted with The Flying Lizards' "Money" in 1979, and then went on to become the regular producer for Michael Nyman until 1992, takes a more detached but positive view of the current scene. "A lot of the music I've been introduced to recently makes me embarrassed about what I was doing when I was 20. There obviously is a different attitude in the generation in their early 20s. Their ears are open again, because they're fed up with all the crap they're fed by the big companies. I'm not in the slightest bit interested in sequenced based dance music — that'll look after itself. I use sequencers as a very different kind of tool, which is the beauty of those machines — nobody uses them in the same way. What would really interest me is the interface between electronics — any kind — in the studio, and the live musician performing in that situation. Which is a long term interest, beginning the first time I heard Terry Riley."

I ask Jon Tye how he reacts when people call his music unemotional. "Good music always is emotional, whatever genre it's in. Certainly a lot of the stuff without vocals now is miles above stuff with vocals. Which is a jazz thing: the sax is the nearest thing to the human voice.

"We don't know how far it can go. Any sort of manipulation of sound is emotional, because that's what you're doing, manipulating your emotions so that other people feel emotional too. If you're involved in creation, that's what you want to do."

It's a view shared by Colin Newman. "The music is so broad: you have some things which are extremely digital, and have a veneer of coldness, and some things which are analogue and warm, you get things which pull you in by their sheer power or sheer beauty. I don't think you can generalise. People are obsessed with narrative, and that's to do with our culture, which raises up information in the form of words, as if this is the most important information that we can receive — something we can read with our eyes. Films, books are narrative, and it's something which people have got very attached to. But actually music is able to communicate pure emotion beyond words, which makes it a very effective way of receiving sometimes extremely elevated information."

Perhaps this is just a blip in the acceleration curve towards the total virtualisation of culture so vividly chronicled by those Canadian terminal theorists, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker in such works as *Spasm* and the forthcoming volume, *Hacking The Future*. Yet even the Krokers have taken to surfing the sinewaves of what they call "death-head Ambient crash music", and have become full-blooded DJs. While preparing this piece I received an e-mail from Kroker in which he told me about the couple's recent tour of Germany: they performed what he describes as "a 'scan' of Scanner, sort of a high-speed, recombinant loop performance of Scanner as the high priest of android ears, dead-air pixel imagery, and glistening sound-spores on his sonic skin."

Prepare for the alien invasion. From Mars. □

Many of the musicians and connections discussed here can be heard on the following compilations: Extreme Possibilities *and* Collaborations *(Lo Recordings)*, Miscellaneous *(Language)*, Statics *(CCI)*, Invisible Soundtracks 1 *and* 2 *(Leaf)*, Em:t 339S *and* Em:t SS9S *(Time Recording)*, Modulation And Transformation II *and* Electric Ladyland *(Mille Plateaux)*, Full Immersion Remixes *(Swim)*, Mesmer Variations *(Touch)*, Further Self Evident Truths 1 *and* 2 *(Rising High)*, Endless *(Manifold)*, Unentitled *(These)*, 3 Fingers And A Fumb *(Blast First)*, Mixing It *(Chill Out)*, Throne Of Drones *and* Swarm Of Drones *(Sombient)*, Macro Dub Infection *(Virgin)*

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Don Cherry was not pure musical spirit, but when he came floating down a street, graceful though gaunt, wood flute at his lips, you'd be excused for thinking so. Then he could recall the Pied Piper, Pan, Orpheus. In performance, as in off-stage chats, the tilt of his head, facial expression, hand gesture, bend of body and vocalisation — besides (most obviously) his improvisations on piano, melodica, the African hunter's harp douss'n gouni and his trademark pocket trumpet — sang volumes.

Cherry brimmed with quicksilver ideas. He addressed each musical situation — all genres of jazz, R&B, rock, pop, interactive electronics, African, Caribbean, Indian and Middle Eastern traditions — without pretension, but with genuine reverence and glad wonder. He died on 19 October 1995, of liver failure caused by hepatitis, with his family around him at the home of his stepdaughter Neneh in Spain. But he liked to say, "There are only beginnings, there is never an end. Music never stops. It's you who is stopping it. It's you who is ending." So consider his life ongoing, from his birth into a part-Choctaw Indian family in Oklahoma City in 1936, through its resoundings to this day.

Cherry's grandmother played piano for silent movies, his mother played piano at home, and his father owned a music venue before the family moved to Los Angeles, where he became a bartender at a bebop hangout called The Plantation Club. Cherry took up trumpet before high school, later jammed with West Coast bop tenor saxophonists Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray and Harold Land, idolised Fats Navarro and was mentored by Clifford Brown ("Clifford told me to be a trumpeter you have to be in shape, like an athlete").

Los Angeles, mid-50s. Cherry's earliest group was The Jazz Messiahs with Billy Higgins, then came his epochal meetings with Ornette Coleman (through Jayne Cortez) and Ed Blackwell, Charlie Haden, Dewey Redman — his old and new dream-mates.

But beyond the harmolodicians, no musician in the world enjoyed more diverse, fruitful collaborations than Cherry. He nudged John Coltrane down uncharacteristic paths on *The Avant Garde* in 1960. He co-led adventurous groups in those halcyon days with Albert Ayler, Sonny Rollins, Steve Lacy and Archie Shepp, before convening an international group in Paris that produced the marvellously tuneful and syncopated *Complete Communion*, then the even richer, colour-drenched *Symphony For Improvisors*.

"Those records," Cherry recalled one afternoon in the autumn of 1989, idling on a Manhattan park bench, "were the first I composed out of a concept I've come to by feeling that we live in a time where we have the knowledge, like remote control, to change from station to station. It's like life — you go around a corner and there's another life beginning, another whole environment."

Besides making his presence felt in small group situations, Cherry stood out, without ever showing off, in large ensembles: hear him wax exotic on "AIR India" from Carla Bley's extravaganza *Escalator Over The Hill*. His own *Relativity Suite* is somewhat lighter of heart than his Berlin based Eternal Rhythm Orchestra, mixing free-leaning Europeans (Albert Mangelsdorf, Anlid Anderson and others) with guitarist Sonny Sharrock and metallophones borrowed from Indonesian gamelan. Cherry soared over George Russell's Big Band ("George writes such difficult music, though," Don once said). A place of honour was always reserved for him in Karl Berger's Creative Music Studio of Woodstock, New York. In the late 80s Cherry moved to San Francisco, in part to join Peter Apfelbaum's Hieroglyphics Ensemble, Apfelbaum (heard on Cherry's 1990 *Multikulti*) was a CMS student a decade before.

By then, Cherry had journeyed far and wide, demonstrating an ability to grasp, unite and enhance traditions without denying or dulling their distinctions, always maintaining his own sound intact. Some of his musical associates in these efforts included Collin Walcott, Nana Vasconcelos, Latif Khan, Okay Temiz, Panamanian-born reedist Carlos Ward, South Africans-in-exile Johnny Dyani, Oudu Pukwana and Abdullah Ibrahim, guitarists Steve Hillage and Todd Rundgren (*L*), Lou Reed (*Bells*), the list went on and on.

Cherry collaborated with film makers (Alexander Jodorowski, for one), dramatists (Robert Wilson), poets (Allen Ginsberg), dancers, rappers and his wife Moki, who's worked splendidly in fabric. He had a keen interest in education, initiating Swedish radio and TV series on music with children that were rebroadcast regularly, appearing in prisons and drug rehabilitation centres, and in 1982 received US National Endowment of the Arts funds to present music workshops in Watts, the black LA community of his teen years.

PHOTOS (LEFT AND RIGHT) ANDREW POTHECARY

traveller

Don Cherry died this October. During his life he pioneered the now standard notion of the mercurial world musician, moving from the jazz clubs of 50s LA to the wide-open spaces of Africa and Asia. Tribute by Howard Mandel

Though Cherry recorded prodigiously, much of his prime work is no longer in print and scattered on labels that were hard to get even when his albums first appeared. For instance, producer Bob Thiele is unlikely to reissue *Human Music*, Cherry's first interaction with Jon Appleton's electronics, dating from his teaching days at Dartmouth College, which ended when he left the US in disgust at Nixon's bombing of Cambodia. (The personal and political never seemed very separate in Cherry's heart, it's said that when black activist Angela Davis was imprisoned in the 60s, love-struck Cherry played wood flutes under her cell's window every day.)

Look hard for *Brown Rice*, one of Cherry's most admired mid-70s albums, or *Live In Ankara* (with drummer Temiz and two other Turkish modernists, recorded in 1969 at the US Embassy), or *Eternal Now* (with a three-piano track and overriding gamelan influence), or 1976's *Here And Now*, produced for Atlantic by Narada Michael Walden and boasting Michael Brecker, Marcus Miller and Lenny White among its players (Cherry credited "the Supreme" for the crickets, and thanked Mother Nature for the ocean's cameo). The two record set *Orient* (Affinity, originally recorded by BYG) pairs an August 72 date of Cherry, Moki on tamboura and Han Bennink on drums, with an April 71 trio featuring Dyani and Temiz. Best of all *Mu Parts 1 And 2* (Affinity/BYG), early 70s duets with Ed Blackwell that are more intimate, lively, special than *El Corazón* on ECM released in 1982.

"A lot of musicians just want to play exotic music. They hear the sound, but they don't want to learn the rudiments of it all"

Once, in an interview, Cherry enthused over Stevie Wonder, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, Linton Kwesi Johnson, dub poet Michael Smith, Earth, Wind And Fire, Dionne Warwick, Gil Scott-Heron, the Bulganan Women's chorus, Mexican mariachis, Pandit Pran Nath, Ravi Shankar and other Indian masters, Trinidadian pan player Boogsie Sharp, calypso star Mighty Sparrow and singer David Rudder, flamenco artists — and he was just warming up. But lest his pan-stylistic, One World, open-to-anything attitude confuse you, Cherry *was* a jazz man first and forever. He said Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie and Roy Eldridge were always inspirations, and that, as well as Navarro and Clifford Brown, he'd listened to Harry 'Sweets' Edison, Chet Baker and Miles Davis. The latter three shared his dry, vibratoless tone and willingness to sound vulnerable.

Whatever influence Davis exerted early on, Cherry eventually turned the other way. In public Miles sneered, "Anyone can tell that guy's not a trumpet player — it's just notes that come out and every note he plays he looks serious about, and people will go for that, especially white people." But when the Dark Prince sat in with Ornette's quartet at the Five Spot, according to Don, "He wanted to try the pocket trumpet and he played practically all night. After I played, Miles said, 'You're the only mother I know who stops his solo right at the bridge.' Then he tried it." Davis's post-*In A Silent Way* use of tablas, sitars and ethnic percussion instruments might have been coincidental or an example of nearly parallel development. But Cherry wore the multikulti garb more naturally. He sought those musics out first hand. He loved them stronger, and probably first.

"It's important to me to be a part of world music, to meet and make music with the musical masters," he explained more than once, no doubt. "I feel free to play whatever I want to play, whether it's different styles of music, or classical, folk or devotional musics, or music that has aspects of all those three things — which I believe can co-exist — along with educational components.

"I also want to be free to improvise forms — not only to improvise on the changes but to be creative enough to improvise new forms while spontaneously composing. But if you want to do that, it's important to play with other musicians who can do that, too."

Cherry had found such musicians in Ornette's circle of improvisors, and though he claimed, "I feel like a student trying to learn more about the harmolodic concept, I'm looking forward to the book Ornette's working on about harmolodics, because it's an endless study," he'd become one of that theory's most lucid professors. That's what he started speaking of on that now receding autumn day, and he continued on about it in a sort of semi-free association that seemed, itself, harmolodic.

"Ornette's system is one of the profound systems of Western music," Cherry eased into his topic, "where you can have notated music and it sounds improvised. And the pureness of the intervals is what makes the brilliance of it swing.

"To me, the word 'swing' in music is the sound. You know, we're all playing the same notes, but it's the *sound* that makes a special swing to it: that's really incredible. When I was in Africa I realised [Ed] Blackwell has that in his playing, how he tunes the drums is how the real master drummer playing a Western trap set will tune his drums. Blackwell tunes so each drum is independent and has a part to play about intonation, pitch. When he's playing he can sound like a different person. In African you have ten drummers, each with their own drum, and playing together they make the rhythm. Each of Blackwell's drums plays a part in relation to the whole sound of the rhythm. That's where it's coming from.

"Myself, I'd rather play the conch than the trumpet, even though you generally can have only one tone on the conch. The physics of the conch make it something that absorbs sound and gives sound out at the same time. You can have a drill playing and you play the conch shell next to it, and the conch will absorb that sound, drown it out at certain points.

"The conch is one of the natural instruments using the embouchure. The embouchure is the real instrument within itself. You get different textures of it with horns like the elephant tusk trumpets they use in Africa. That sound is something special to me. What I'm really into is just the horn itself, without the valves, the rotary of the trumpet.

"Once you start using the valves, you realise they're auxiliary fingering, and trumpet players are usually playing up and down and down and up, but there's a way that the trumpet can be brought out in intervals, like you have in bugle calls. I'm very much interested in all that.

"I realise all these things, but I realise most of all that the trumpet to me is an amplifier of the voice. That's the way I want to approach it. Also, I think of it as a form of nature, or dance and movement. Where I'm playing phrases, or maybe something chromatic, I'm not trying to show technique as a virtuoso. I'm thinking in relation to movement or maybe nature and wind, how the trees are blowing, [or] in terms of dance, because dance is always an important part of music. Dance and movement and the sound of the voice are very important, no matter what type of music I'm playing.

"It's really an extension of those things for me. I always considered the piano keyboard in relation to composing, and you have the harmonies there in which to hear the other voices. The doussn' gouni is something that happened in my life — I guess it was inevitable from being around ethnic music, but at first I was lucky to be around Western musicians who had been to Africa and the East to study, such as the Swedish musicians Christine Botine and Bernt Berger. Between them they'd studied in Ghana and India and Morocco. Then I went on in that music to learn the right way, went to India myself, meeting masters while I was travelling, studied with them in Europe or when we met wherever we were in the world.

"A lot of musicians just want to play exotic music. They hear the sound, but they don't want to really learn the rudiments of it all, the foundations of certain musics. Indian music for instance. You have to go there, really.

"In the Western system of music some people get into where the technique is the main thing, and audiences, that's what they applaud. It's like some people confuse technique with professionalism. I hate professionalism. I've been a professional musician long enough, and have shown I can do it. But professionalism becomes a religion in certain quarters, and to me, there's more to religion than that. I don't put people down for having technique, because it's important. The discipline of practising, and bettering, having control with the technique — that's important, too.

"I practise. I practise compositions. I've studied Turkish music, which is very technical, and fuevos, Brazilian songs of a certain form, I practise what I found in them. The jazz compositions I used to know, Charlie Parker's things. I practise Ornette's compositions.

"And long tones — in relation to the trumpet, you have to keep that. If you lose it, man, if you start taking music for granted, or take *playing* music for granted, you take away from yourself. I've seen that happen. It's like they say in India: 'A life is not long enough to learn music.'" □

PHOTO MARC MARNIE

Following the death of Jerry Garcia, **John Oswald**'s *Grayfolded*, a digital reworking of The Grateful Dead's "Dark Star", has assumed new, ghostly qualities. Interview by Simon Reynolds

rites of the living dead

There are a number of different schools of sampling. For some (A Guy Called Gerald, The Young Gods, Techno Animal), there's a fierce conviction (50 per cent aesthetic, 50 per cent legal anxiety) that all samples must be masked, all sources rendered unrecognisable. This is the modernist school of sampladelia: digital technology as a crucible for sonic alchemy, *musique concrète* made easy as pie. I have a lot of sympathy for this ethos, but there's a sense in which this approach reduces the sampler to a synthesizer, and thereby misses what is truly idiomatic to the machine: taking the known and making it strange, yet still retaining an uncanny, half-recognisable trace of the original's aura.

Canadian musician/producer John Oswald falls into the second, postmodern camp. Sampling, or as he prefers to term it, "electroquoting", is a highly self-conscious practice that allows him to interrogate notions of originality, copyright, signature and 'the death of the author'. Long before the sampler became available, he was using more cumbersome, time-consuming techniques of tape cut 'n' splice to create his famous if seldom heard Mystery Lab cassettes. But he really made a name for himself in 1989 with the *Plunderphonics* CD, which caused a major ruckus, sonically and institutionally, with its digital vivisections of songs by The Beatles, Elvis, Dolly Parton, Michael Jackson, Glenn Gould, etc. What happened next has passed into postmodern folklore: despite the fact that *Plunderphonics* was distributed on a non-commercial, non-profit basis, the Canadian Recording Industry Association, acting on behalf of its clients CBS and Michael Jackson, threatened Oswald with litigation. He was forced to destroy the master tapes and all remaining CDs. 700 remain in circulation, while the intrigued can still get bootleg copies from a number of Copyright Violation Squads (see below).

> **"At certain points you think: What's happening? Have the drugs kicked in?"**

Since then Oswald has mostly confined his plunderphonic escapades to cases where his reworkings have been solicited, like his de- and re-constructions of songs by The Doors and Metallica, among others, for a limited release CD celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Elektra Records. An exception was *Plexure* (released on John Zorn's Avant label), where Oswald cannibalised the entire audiorama of contemporary pop and rock in one fell swoop. The result — 500D songs 'composited' into a 2D minute frenzy of crescendos, choruses, screams, powerchords, etc — is a bit like Napalm Death with samplers.

Last year, at the invitation of The Grateful Dead, Oswald plunderphonized that group's most famous and far-out song "Dark Star", producing the double CD *Grayfolded*. The first disc, *Transitive Axis*, was released last year; now the second half, *Mirror Ashes*, has been added, and the whole *Grayfolded* package is being made widely available, following the unexpectedly warm reception *Transitive* received from the Deadhead community (50,000 copies sold!).

Entering The Dead's legendary vaults, where recordings of virtually every performance they ever made are stacked, Oswald spent 21 days listening to 100 versions of "Dark Star", and extracted 40 hours of improvisatory material. The original plan was to create just one disc, but he soon realised he had enough good stuff for two. *Transitive* and *Mirror* each took three months of painstaking digital labour to construct. The results, as anyone who bought the first part will know, are astonishing. Whereas the iconoclasm (literally idol-smashing) of *Plunderphonics* was patently audible, *Grayfolded* is true to the spirit of The Dead: the nine tracks of *Transitive*, in particular, form one seamless, fluent monster-jam which sounds almost like a plausible real-time event with The Dead in unusually kosmik form. Although Oswald's techniques allow Garcia, Weir, Lesh *et al* to jam with their own doppelgangers across a 25 year timespan, the digital methodology doesn't really draw attention to itself on the first disc (it gets a bit more outre on *Mirror Ashes*, though).

One of the ironies of *Grayfolded* is that Oswald wasn't exactly a Deadhead when he embarked on the project. "I enjoyed 1969's *Live/Dead*, especially "Dark Star", and might have heard the odd C&W song or "Truckin", but I basically didn't listen to them for 25 years," he admits over the phone from his Toronto office. "But I found what I expected in the vaults — all kinds of great things were happening in concert. I also went to two Dead shows. The first was in Oakland, their home town, and I thought, 'Well, this is not great improvising', but it was fascinating sociologically, in so far as there's this relationship between an extremely active, fertile audience and a very untheatrical musical experience

onstage A year later I went to another show in New York, and found that musically it was quite satisfying, almost like a completely different band So I started to respect the idea that an audience would follow this band looking for these good concerts I had got one out of two, a good ratio"

In the lysergic daze of late 60s acid rock, The Dead did weird studio-as-instrument stuff on early albums like *Anthem Of The Sun* and *Aoxomoa*, but today one associates the group with a keep-it-live, jam-a-long mess-thetic, possibly because their legacy is godawful American neo-tie-dye groups like Blues Traveller and Phish Was there a sense in which Oswald was making a case for digital music as the new psychedelia, and making up for The Dead's abandonment of the studio's possibilities?

Actually, no "The technique of this record — using computers, digital transfers and stuff — is really incidental to the illusion I'm trying to present People would tell me to stop listening to the tapes and go to a concert, because live it's a totally different thing And I thought what constitutes this other 'thing'? It's obviously not in the band itself, because there's no theatricality Maybe it's because there's so much drugs in the air! What I found at the concerts is there's a give and take between the audience and band there are audience surges triggered by certain things the band do, or by the lighting, which is very subtle and directs the visual attention back onto the audience every so often I thought 'Well, we're not going to soak the CD cover in acid, so how can I achieve what I think everybody desires — a record that captures this feeling that Dead concerts are magic?' So I did things that are unnatural, like have a young Jerry Garcia sing with an old Jerry, or have an orchestra of multiple Dead musicians, all in order to pump up the sonic experience so that at certain points you think 'What's happening? Have the drugs kicked in?'"

These paradoxical sensations — a real-time, flow-motion group suddenly transfigured and transcendentalized — were created via an array of intensely artificial and finicky techniques, such as 'folding', whereby Oswald took similar material from different concerts and layered them vertically, achieving a density similar to the effect Phil Spector got from having several pianos playing the same chords "For instance, on *Transitive Axis* I took a really nice 12 minute duet between Phil Lesh and Jerry Garcia, trimmed out redundant ideas and folded it down to three minutes Yet it still feels like a duet. Using a computer, it's easy to take something from later in a musical sequence and slide it in earlier, superimposing it on a different track of the mix. I used to do that in my earlier analogue days but it was much harder to do it accurately With computers, I can move things by a millisecond till they fit exactly in the rhythmic pocket, so you still have the 'feel' of a band

"After the first disc, Lesh said he would have liked to hear even more folding, and in response I took the entirety of *Transitive Axis* and folded it 14 times This created 16,384 layers and squeezed 60 minutes into two seconds! It sounds like a feedback rush or a jet engine, and I slipped it into "Cease Tone Beam" on the second disc It's a bit like that JG Ballard idea that in the future people will listen to Wagner operas that have been compressed from four hours to a few seconds, but still have the flavour, like a whiff of perfume"

"Cease Tone Beam" itself is Oswald's plunderphonia at its most extreme From the 'drumspace' sections of Dead shows, which often segue into "Dark Star", Oswald took a minute and a half fragment of ultra-low end percussion timbre, generated on Mickey Hart's custom-made aluminium beam Oswald slowed it down 16 times into a protracted sub-aural seism, over which he layered progressively shorter, less slowed down swatches of percussion that went up in ratios (2, 4, 8) that generated a simple harmonic relationship The result, at once ethereal and chthonic, other- and under-wordly, is the missing link between avant Grunge unit The Melvins and Eno's *On Land*

Oswald doesn't really know how The Grateful Dead feel about *Grayfolded* Ex-keyboard player Tom Constanten did send him a thank you note, but the death of Jerry Garcia left the rest of the guys "pretty preoccupied" Diehard Deadheads responded extremely well to *Transitive Axis*, but the more anti-naturalistic *Mirror Ashes* has stirred the first charges of heresy Oswald's favourite reaction is "from a guy on the Internet who wrote that *Grayfolded* makes him cry, because it encapsulates 25 years of Garcia, and it's unreal in a way that gave him a very visceral sensation of it being a ghost."

Garcia's death does shine a peculiar light on the whole project, in so far as it suggests that a kind of involuntary immortality for artists may soon become widespread Oswald has shown that a sympathetic ear can 'play' another artist's aesthetic like an instrument. But what's to stop an unsympathetic, money-motivated ear doing the same thing? In the future, will artists copyright their 'soul-signature' and then sell it to the highest bidder to be exploited after their demise? Fond of visual and filmic analogies, Oswald mentions that the movie business has been trying to devise ways of taking dead stars and creating simulations of them to play new parts. The mind boggles

In addition to plunderphonic activity, Oswald works as a producer, where he deploys unique recording techniques like his Orbital Microphone Navigational Imaging Via Echotronic Radio Stereo Eccentricity, aka OMNIVERSE (a mic with the aural equivalent of a zoom lens, enabling it to do a 'tracking shot' down the entire length of a piano string) He also writes pieces for orchestra, and, as we speak, is putting the finishing touches to a stage production involving 22 choreographers "none of whom know what the others are doing" Back on the plunderphonic front, Oswald is about to embark on a massive opus that will somehow "encapsulate this first century of music recording history that is about to come to an end" □

Grayfolded *is released by Swell/Artifact (through Terrapin Trucking, 0181 292 0085) To get free cassette copies of* Plunderphonics *and the Elektra EP, send an SAE or IRC and a C100 cassette to Copyright Violation Squad, PO Box 1324, Muscatine, Iowa 52761, USA*

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In the popular imagination, the music of **Vini Reilly** and The Durutti Column describes a hermetic universe of bedsitter angst and New Age discourse. Not so, says Reilly, who claims his music has more in common with Fats Waller, flamenco, Charles Ives, Heavy Metal and the vanguard technology of CD-ROM. Interview by Paul Stump

content in a • void

The uniquely personal intimacy of the music of Vini Reilly and The Durutti Column might seem a strange bedfellow for the medium of CD-ROM doesn't Reilly's guitar-playing evoke a universe of atavistic bedsitterdom and nostalgic singularity far removed from the hi-tech globalism of cutting-edge computer technology?

That was the opinion of this writer, at least until I saw Reilly squatting cross-legged on the floor at London's ICA this October, picking out an angular and richly chromatic acoustic guitar improvisation to the accompaniment of a sequence of images from The Durutti Column's first venture into the domain of CD-ROM, a hugely entertaining extrapolation from their already hugely entertaining *Sex And Death* album (released earlier this year on London/Factory Records) But fair to Vini — it works

Factory Records generalissimo Tony Wilson is characteristically upbeat about the whole undertaking "CD-ROMs allow intimacy," he booms from his lectern to the assembled guests at the CD-ROM's ICA launch, "and what better music to use than Vini's?"

Doubly debatable perhaps, but it's undeniable that with *Sex And Death* Wilson and Reilly have foisted an engaging if problematic project on the world 18 months in gestation, it is centred around long term Factory associates The Blue Room's expansion of the traditional design remit of the record sleeve vis-a-vis new technological possibilities For

ALL PHOTOS OF VINI REILLY, HERE AND OVER, BY DEAN BELCHER

Hipgnosis's airbrush, now read The Blue Room's hypertext.

According to Wilson, "The sleeve — and sleeve notes — are part of the aesthetic experience of buying a record that too often just gets overlooked these days. CDs don't have the same visual capacity as an LP sleeve or a gatefold. Now, a CD-ROM is different." He laughs. "Don't worry, this isn't some attempt to resurrect the triple fold-out booklet sleeve or whatever. It's just that we think there is a demand for such things among the record buying public — sleeve art, technical details — and it's no use ignoring it. We believe that a CD-ROM is the best way of presenting it, and also gives us the maximum potential for stretching the potential of how to present it." Anyone aware of the cool, minimal austerity of Factory's visual concepts — discernible in a string of special projects from early boxed sets to offshoots like New Order videos — would do well to take Wilson's sentiments seriously.

While the relatively simplistic point-and-click methodology of the *Sex And Death* CD-ROM (which conjures lyrics, exhaustive production notes and musicianly data over minimal and primary-hued backgrounds) might seem tame to some, there is an undercurrent of macabre and unsettling anecdote

laced throughout the story of the album — both pertinent to and removed from its musical content — that salvages it from muso hell and also denotes it as a characteristic Reilly work.

Reilly, a man for whom the word 'gaunt' might have been coined (although his wasted pallor masks a warmth and a knowlegeable chattiness that are rare in musicians who inhabit music's esoteric channels), is probably well used to muso charges, a topic we discuss later. But with the release of this new project, he'll have to get used to other unkind and irrelevant barbs about myopic self-absorption in the creative act. He was, for instance, described by one of the numerous computer hacks at the ICA launch as "looking as though he'd spent too long in front of a computer."

Reilly smiles the first of many rueful smiles. "I swear to God, I've never been able even to work a computer properly. I even try to steer clear of mixing desks. I'm just the guitar player. I go into the studio and I pick up something which I know a bit about. As for the rest... "

To this end, Reilly's input into the genesis of the *Sex And Death* CD-ROM was limited. He was required to play a few extra riffs on each of the four guitars used in the album recording by way of illustrating four sites on the ROM that can be clicked into for further details about the make, model and individual history of each particular instrument. "I provided voice samples — and the commentary about them — as well as straightforward interview material," he says. "Really, just little bits over the space of a year, and to be honest I've been set back watching it evolve because I've also been in the process of recording another album.

"To me *Sex And Death* is an old album already. It was a bit strange to go in one day and record tracks for the newer album and then go in the next day and work on the CD-ROM. But I'm really pleased with the way the whole thing's turned out visually and musically."

Do his self-confessed Luddite tendencies prove a burden in the development of his music? "Actually, in music, technology is quite important to me," he says. "It's important in the actual process of making music. I'm surrounded by musos a lot of the time — their attitude towards technology can be very ambiguous. On the one hand they love it, they embrace it all, on the other.

"For example," he continues, warming to a theme, "when dance music and all its attendant technology came along, people dismissed it as being just too mechanical — no feeling, no emotion. But for me, the sampler has now become a musical instrument, rather than seeing technology as an enemy, the musician should take it on himself to make the technology musical.

"With a sampler, you can take the greatest voices in the world — like that of Joan Sutherland, for instance — and you can take one sampled note of her voice, transfer it to a keyboard and instil all her musical qualities into your melodies. Fabulous! You have to devote technology to your own ends. That's what it's there for, to be used. The sampler is one electronic device I know I can use.

"One of my biggest influences is Fats Waller, a phenomenal player. His gift was to employ complex chords in accessible melodies, and that's my aim too, no matter how technical it sounds"

"If people think that the sleeve note angle on the CD-ROM is just a sop to musos, then I don't really care. People have every right to be interested in stuff like that. Listen," he says by way of opening a new space in the argument, "one of my biggest influences is Fats Waller, a phenomenally technically-gifted player. I never saw the point of doing things ultra-fast or flashy like Hendrix or Jimmy Page, because they were much better at it than me; the same goes for Segovia or Julian Bream. But Waller's gifts were to employ complex chords in accessible melodies, and that's my aim too, no matter how technical it sounds."

We're back to the muso question. Self-possessed and almost penitent in the crouch he adopts over the guitar, it's hard to dismiss notions of musicianly obsession when one sees devotion to an instrument like Reilly's. But not only is he quick to defend himself from any accusations of obsessiveness, he's also quick to comment volubly on the position of the musically-gifted technician per se. For example, his own technical tendencies are backboned with an intellectual rigour and an infectiously enthusiastic sense of the musical esotericism which all good musicians should possess. On the differing qualities of the Fender Stratocaster and the Gibson Les Paul he's particularly enlightening: instead of underlining volume levels that climb up to 11, he says, "The Les Paul, it's a great instrument, but basically it's like an acoustic guitar which you can play very loudly and distort a bit. The Stratocaster is superior for all sorts of reasons. I'm a big fan of Charles Ives, who understood overtones — he knew that you can't keep a brass band in tune, especially outdoors, without creating overtones which usually are quite soft and musical and nice to listen to, but in this instance become clashing and discordant. You don't always hear them, sometimes you feel them. That's the tonal benefit of using the Stratocaster. Use the whammy-bar on a Stratocaster, and you get all manner of quarter-tones, like on a sitar.

"I'm not some star virtuoso guitarist. For a start, when I met Robert Fripp, I was amazed that he knew who I was. If you want virtuosity, check out those guys who play flamenco on the street in Spain — astonishing, and then there's the added fascination for me of tight structural constraints opening up spaces for improvisation within the music. Another one of my heroes is a guitarist, a pedal steel player from India called Sunil Ganguly who does a lot of film music but also interprets folk songs, ghazals etc, and that is so beautiful to listen to, so romantic. I've never attempted to be a virtuoso player like that: they have their place, I have mine. All of us are trying to write good music."

Dissenting voices have argued that the very simplicity and (surface) romanticism of the Durutti project is to its detriment when it meets the visuals of CD-ROM. Such discourse, these same voices maintain, courts the Lifestyle Channel wholemeal of New Age, with its picture-music causality of multimedia panaceas. In other words, what has become of the whole Greil Marcus/Guy Debord deconstructive matrix that hangs vaguely around the group's name. Durutti himself was an anarchist: doesn't *Sex And Death* compromise any subversive qualities the group might possess?

These are all misnomers. Laying aside the entire argument as to how and why music can or even should be subversive in the first place, it's possible to argue that the whole point of the Durutti's' devotion to the subjective and fragrantly lyrical was always essentially subversive. In the gob-and-pogo hell of late 70s Britpunk, Reilly and his Mancunian orbit (Wilson, producer Martin Hannett and others) demonstrated that hollow 70s alienation and contemplative lyricism could co-exist happily and fruitfully. 'Basement King Crimson' it may have been dubbed by some, but it was the first out-growth of 1977 to attempt to soothe the savage breast rather than inflame it by using the abrasive techniques of the time. I ventured my initial thoughts that the music of The Durutti Column had won itself this (possibly undeserved) reputation as being somehow too lofty, too refined to lend itself easily to new media without appearing affected.

Reilly laughs. "I find it totally mad, all this," he says slightly bemused, "that people come up with the metaphors for The Durutti Column that they do. Do they listen to our stuff? There's screaming feedback on some tracks, Heavy Metal guitar, Spanish picking. It's not just this ethereal trip. It's not anything. People are so obsessed with form. Is it classical? Is it jazz? You know the stuff. You see people going to concerts, dressed in the way they think they should dress, purely because of pre-conceived notions of what music is, because they're so obsessed with pinning music down, stereotyping it by form and preserving it in aspic. It enables us to forget that as well as there being some great classical music, there is some dreadful bollocks classical music, as there is with all types of music. Don't listen to the form, never listen to the form, listen to the content. That's why I'm not ashamed to say that I listen to Prog rock albums. Steve Howe, what a great musician! Don't listen to the style, the tradition, the technique, just the content of the music, and then judge. People say The Durutti Column is this or that. I don't care, so long as we make good music. There's so much good music around. Don't bother with form: just enjoy." □

Sex And Death *is out now on London/Factory Too, and is reviewed in Multimedia,* *page 73*

invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of. . .

Robert Wyatt

Tested by Mike Barnes

In 1973 Robert Wyatt fell out of a window at a party and suffered an injury which left him paralysed from the waist down. Although it effectively ended his spell as one of the UK's most inventive drummers, his musical career continued — he happened to be one of the UK's most inventive singers, songwriters and arrangers, too. Beginning as a drummer and singer in The Wilde Flowers in mid-60s Canterbury, Wyatt went on to a famous five year stint with Soft Machine. In 1972 he formed the more spontaneous, and equally acclaimed, Matching Mole. Post-accident, Wyatt found his true voice and recorded his best work, starting with *Rock Bottom* in 1974. The same year, his version of The Monkees' "I'm A Believer" made the charts — a feat repeated eight years later with the Elvis Costello song "Shipbuilding". In between his own releases, his collaborations have been many and various, from Brian Eno to Mike Mantler, Working Week to Ultramarine. Wyatt joined the Communist party in the mid-70s and his work became increasingly political throughout the 80s. After a five year hiatus, he re-emerged in 1991 with *Dondestan*, his best work for 15 years. An instrumental mini-album *A Short Break* followed. He is currently negotiating a new record deal. The interview took place in Wyatt's home in Louth, Lincolnshire.

CHARLES MINGUS

"Haitian Fight Song" from *The Clown* (Atlantic)

I never saw this band. I do think he's underestimated in importance as a bass player: it's good that you've got one here where he starts on his own. I think he's probably my favourite ever bass player. Apparently he used more fingers than other bass players. He used three fingers of his right hand, which is why you get rather uneven walking lines, using the middle finger and the first finger. What I like about his solos is that they're the most like speech patterns of any bass player, so that makes him the most remarkable.

This has got a strong melody and even though it's just a quintet, it's like a whole group feeling — not just soloists and a rhythm section, a real group. [Looks at CD] It's from *The Clown*! My God, that is going back.

In your biography you mention a lot of bass players as major musical influences.

It's what drummers work with — we're both in the engine room so they're the ones you get to know and that can be the crucial thing. Also when I'm making a record, it's the one thing that I can't do myself, so I have to get in a bass player.

One of the things that influenced me about Mingus is the compositional thing. There's a tendency in jazz, and it can be alright, for each composition to be a vehicle for the soloists to do their stuff — that's the only reason that tune is chosen. Whereas with Mingus, each piece has got its own character and it's very particular. And even with a small group, an informal set-up like that, they're playing that piece, not some other piece — that's what I like. Because he came from the West Coast and not the East Coast, he got involved in a lot of his early workshops with a mixture of all sorts of strange people that he might not mix with in some other context. But the first groups he had were extremely academic sort of intellectual exercises, the Mingus Workshops. He gradually got bluesier, but his bluesiness had a terrific intellectual authority because he'd done all this technical homework beforehand. So he was in total mastery of time signatures and harmonic complexities and so on.

THE RAINCOATS

"Fairytale In The Supermarket" from *The Raincoats* (Rough Trade)

It's English anyway. Could it be The Slits? Is it Palm Olive? I really think she's good — let me get in a plug for Palm Olive as a fellow drummer. I once said [to The Slits], 'If you ever want me to drum on your records I'd be happy to come', but they never asked me. I was very hurt by that, but never mind, I got to play with The Raincoats instead. It's not The Slits? Blimey, I'm pleased I recognised the drumming. It's Palm Olive and somebody. Yeah. Go! Go!

It's from The Raincoats' first album, with Palm Olive on drums.

I did the last gig in my life [in B1] with The Raincoats. We did "Born Again Cretin", which they did very well. I really enjoyed it. I didn't know [this] was The Raincoats because I didn't hear their first record. To be fair, that definitely wasn't An Up singing. What threw me was that distinctive drumming style that I associate with The Slits — that's my excuse. Very nice. I liked that.

How did you come to play with The Raincoats?

I think they were on Rough Trade and we met around Rough Trade. It was a fairly loose set-up where people were listening to each other's stuff and clocking what each other were doing.

You played with other post-punk groups and musicians — Scritti Politti, and Epic Soundtracks from Swell Maps. Few other musicians from your generation got so directly involved in that area.

Well it surprised me, to be honest. If I was asked and I could do it, on the whole I would. I liked the attitude round then. There were a lot of people I got on with better from that eruption than from that early period in the 70s, that I might have been expected to identify with. I liked the rough and ready approach. It's like somebody said about me: I'm like Jimmy Sommerville on valium, and I haven't got his get-up-and go, I've got a

lot of get-down-and-stay But apart from that I really liked all the people I heard from that period

I didn't think rock 'n' roll was so precious that it had to be played in tune It never struck me as the essential ingredient in the first place In fact by having that strange detuning that they all seemed to do — that slightly untuned desafinato that they had — it gave a bit of harmonic interest to a music that normally doesn't have any at all The music I'd been involved in listening to before, the jazz, had gone into a tailspin of rejection of organisation anyway So quite a lot of pop groups at that time were a sort of electrified version of a free jazz revival — which to those of us who were accustomed to these things was quite nostalgic really

VARIOUS ARTISTS

"Smash The Social Contract" from *Cornelius Cardew Memorial Concert* (Impetus)

Oh it's Communist Party, brackets, Marxist-Leninist, close brackets Could it be Laurie Baker, the composer? I think I recognise that pianist Oh, that's very interesting that, because Cornelius Cardew used to write a lot of pieces, but I don't think that is Cornelius Cardew Although he did take on the attempt to write popular songs, that would have been in the era when I don't think he specifically dealt with things like the Social Contract The things I remember by him at the time were more internationalist, but it may be

it *is* composed by Cardew, a performance from his memorial concert in 82.

Is it really? Oh, that's interesting It could have been Laurie Baker on drums. [Looks at sleeve] Laurie Baker, there you are

One thing to say about Cornelius Cardew, before anybody says 'what a load of crap' or anything like that, is he was the most stunningly knowledgeable musician One of the few in this country that had that really encyclopaedic knowledge of music, that we associate with non-English figures like Pierre Boulez and people like that. And had he lived he would have been recognised as one of the giants of music, just because of the breadth and depth of his knowledge What people object to, of course, is the way that he channelled that vast knowledge into certain disciplines, but I think that's very heroic myself, and it was very interesting to hear it

Cardew was obviously keen to get his message across to the greatest number of people by putting it in an accessible 'popular song' form. But do you think the rather knockabout knees-up style of this particular song actually works?

Well the thing is, they set themselves more problems than they tried to solve, because by seeing what you could do without really using Transatlantic popular culture at all, your departure point into the new age comes from somewhere around Gilbert & Sullivan in the end So you end up becoming Marxist-Leninist-Gilbert & Sullivan-ist! Nobody in England should object to that — we're all very proud of Gilbert & Sullivan I would suspect anyone's political motives of disapproving of Cornelius Cardew on those grounds It's the great thing, innit, Britpop, this year? You can't get more Britpop than Gilbert & Sullivan So he was right in there, Cornelius, ahead of the pack as usual

I'm not saying he got everything right, but I like his attitude with all this knowledge, trying to focus it instead of bathing in it in a sort of narcissistic glory of talent. He never tried to do that and I think it's very unusual

HATFIELD AND THE NORTH

"Fitter Stoke Has A Bath" from *The Rotters Club* (Virgin)

Oh, that's Richard [Sinclair] What a lovely voice, it's so true On *Rock Bottom* he and Hugh Hopper really held it together [on bass]. In the mid-60s — he actually came from a musical background, his dad was a musician — although he was younger than us, he always used to sing in tune which I thought was pretty avant garde at the time, and actually I learnt to do the same It took me a few years. A musician that he liked even when he was a teenager was Nat King Cole, who *nobody* listened to in the 60s. Nat King Cole people don't realise why singers like him so much It's because he's so in tune, so accurate That's half the battle really — and Richard always was

Hatfield And The North were one of the most fêted groups from that whole Canterbury Scene of the 60s and 70s. Was there any sense of a 'scene' at the time, or has it just become labelled thus with hindsight?

The first time I heard of the Canterbury Scene was in an article It was invented by that bloke who does family trees [Pete Frame] and in order to do family trees, you have to have families If I hadn't been told I was in a thing called the Canterbury Scene it wouldn't have occurred to me It surprised me that such a thing came to pass and it was interesting how these history books eventually get written It makes you wonder about them [Laughs]

I had a very, very unhappy and unsuccessful time at school in Canterbury, during which time I actually lived nearer Dover I think in the long run, despite some very nice and to me now seemingly essential associations like Hugh Hopper, I was unhappy in Canterbury I know Dave Sinclair [Ex-Caravan and Matching Mole] is very affectionate about it. I never had that kind of ruralist affection I was taken to the country at about the age of ten, simply because my Dad had a terminal illness and retired early, somewhere where he could take it easy for a few years As far as I was concerned, my life was shut up in my room doing little paintings and listening to records — so what I really remember is the records I listened to and the paintings I tried to do Highlights were saving up enough money to go to London to concerts, or buy an Ornette Coleman record

I wasn't primarily interested in music for a start, and secondly, I certainly couldn't play People have put out demos and tapes from that period from the 60s which I'm on, and I just find them so ridiculous I can't believe anybody wants to listen to them

KING CRIMSON

"Cat Food" from *In The Wake Of Poseidon* (Island)

I'm trying to work out where that bassline comes from Oh, what is that? People do that, use a classic bassline and it throws you You spend the whole time trying to remember what it is Oh, John Lennon It's from a Beatles ... that one they did on the roof It's very interesting indeed They can all really play [Wyatt later identifies the bassline as coming from The Beatles' "Come Together"]

it's King Crimson from 1970 with Keith Tippett on piano.

I was going to say, the pianist was particularly good [Laughs] Michael Giles on drums? He's a terrific drummer, I should have guessed it from that. To be honest a lot of bands came up around 68, and in 68 we [Soft Machine] were in America What I heard of the other bands at that time were Big Brother & The Holding Company, Sly & The Family Stone and The Buddy Miles Express, and Larry Coryell playing in the smaller clubs American groups, basically, and of course we were with Hendrix. I didn't really know much at all about English bands who would have been considered our contemporaries I don't remember ever actually going to a rock concert that I didn't have to play at.

One of the reasons that we played this track is that it's an example of the meeting ground of Progressive rock with experimental jazz of the era. Both King Crimson and Soft Machine used Keith Tippett's horn section [Marc Charig and Nick Evans]. King Crimson also collaborated with South African exiles like bass player Harry Miller, while you collaborated with brass players Mongezi Feza and Gary Windo.

The connection is very simple — Keith Tippett's personality A West Country bloke with a great big heart and completely unlike the Old Boy Network jazz mafia that was the London scene at the time. He had all barriers down, listened to everybody, open-minded, never put anybody down, and one of his things was to get all these different musicians from different genres together — particularly the South African exiles He would get together these bands and get us into them and then we'd meet each other So really you could put a lot of that down to one man

I think Mongs [Feza] and the South Africans we knew anyway, because we used to go down to Ronnie's old place and see The Blue Notes when they came to London Although I didn't know them personally then, it would certainly have helped getting acquainted with Keith Tippett and Gary Windo and all those people Alfie [Wyatt's wife] knew Johnny Dyani and Chris McGregor, and when we got together in 70-71, I also got to know her friends as well, so that would be another connection It was Alfie, Evan Parker pointed out, who introduced him to John Stevens, for example Chris McGregor was another one with a big heart

NINA SIMONE

"I Put a Spell On You" from *I Put a Spell On You* (Mercury)

[Immediately] Ah yes, this is nice to hear [Sings along] There's a fantastic saxophone solo on this but I don't know who it is It's so great. [Sings along to

solo] Yeah! Then she picks it up and he keeps on going, he keeps pushing it Now he's finished Cor, that's the stuff The saxophone solo is like some of the players who played with James Brown Maceo Parker

Now, there's a thing that pissed me off a few months ago Everybody's favourite parliamentary candidate, Screaming Lord Sutch, was on [the radio] and boasting, quite rightly, that he's the one who eventually got rid of David Owen by beating him in an election — which is a great contribution to British politics But then he was on about how he did everything before everybody, long hair and all that, and then he talked about all his coffin stuff and he was way ahead there, but he got all that coffin stuff and that whole act from the bloke who wrote this song, Screaming Jay Hawkins For him [Hawkins] the *"spell on you"* was the big thing He was into all that necromancy and I don't know what else

Didn't you used to sing this with The Wilde Flowers in the mid-60s?

I think I used to sing it but I have a hard time remembering more than about 20 years ago to be honest But certainly Nina Simone was very important In fact most of the singers that I was influenced by were women, funnily enough I seem to have more affinity with women's voices than with men's That's because my voice never broke really

I think she's a great singer, not just a good one I'd put her up with Ray Charles The thing is, she doesn't quite belong anywhere Really she belongs in the continental tradition of chanson singers, Jacques Brel and all that sort of thing, Edith Piaf — that dramatic presentation of songs It partly came out of a folk tradition of music hall but not the jokey side of it Oscar Brown Junior was that as well It's not pop and it's not jazz, it's not any of the categories that now exist It's more intimate, more nightclubby Amazing presence When she's in Ronnie [Scott]'s she makes the place look really small It's like having a real queen in a room, the real nature's aristocracy By the time I saw her, she was no longer hitting the notes She just sort of intimated them, sketched them in the air And it was all you needed if you knew the songs

PUBLIC ENEMY

"Party For Your Right To Fight" from *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back* (Def Jam)

Sounds like they're sampling Sly Stone NWA or something like that?

It's someone equally well known.

Not by me, evidently It's not Public Enemy? I'm trying to work out what they're sampling Oh well, I know this one I think that's one of the great lines *"It takes a nation of millions to hold us back"* It completely inverts the whole notion of dissidence It's very close on from The Last Poets, the first people who did this kind of thing, without a rhythm section, just a cappella

What I like about [rap's] kind of talking — in posh music it's called *Sprechgesange* — is that for some reason it liberated words There's been a problem, I think, in black pop music since Motown Even in some of the stuff I really love, the lyrics are a bit like rhyming soap operas What's nice about all this black *Sprechgesange* is that it actually liberated the language that you could use on a pop record It was a shame because in all this time, the black Americans were reinventing the English language every five years and made a massive contribution throughout the century, probably even before, to revitalising the language, then you get the Motown pop songs that sound great but they all just go *"Ooh Baby"* It was a waste of all that fantastic vocabulary that's been cooking in the streets — so it was very nice that it broke through [with rap]

Although Public Enemy get their message over without any compromise, there's some witty interplay going on between Chuck D and Flavor Flav.

I used to listen a lot to Peter Tong's rap sessions on Radio 1 and there is some very funny, very witty stuff going on And as for the stuff that people think is terminally defensive in attitude, I don't think that anyone who hasn't been to America and been around on the streets. I don't feel you can talk about it unless you've been there It's a long time since I've been, 25 years, but I found white American racism made me feel ill and I wasn't even particularly interested in the subject at the time But if I lived there, I think I wouldn't really be answerable for what it would do to my

brain — and that's just me So what it must be for someone who's in the firing line, I can't imagine

SLY & THE FAMILY STONE

"Don't Call Me Nigger, Whitey" from *Stand!* (CBS)

[Immediately] Oh, that is Sly Stone [Drums on table] Yeah, there's one thing about Sly Stone that I really like First of all it's like Mingus, there are lots of dimensions in it — a foreground, a middle ground and a background, and there's something happening in all of them It's very beautifully spaced Also that Mingus thing of each piece is a whole world of its own [During wah-wah harmonica break] Another thing is, I was very influenced by him in this business of the wordless 'vocal guitar solos' [Wyatt's trademark scat style]

Funnily enough, I was listening to this track this morning and it suddenly became apparent that it's like your own vocal style.

That's it Almost like harmonica solos with your mouth right up to the mic [cups hand over mouth to give wah-wah effect] and you take a breath Wonderful And I thought, 'Yeah, I can play solos now!'

I went to see Sly Stone when I was in the States, but the record that most knocked us out when we [Soft Machine] were in the States was *Stand!* That was as good as rock music got at the time — absolutely amazing And the singers he gets in — that woman's a fantastic singer He got ever such good players

I read somewhere that you're a big fan of [Sly's bassist] Larry Graham.

Yeah, absolutely One of the great bass players of all time and a great singer, deep voice, when he had his own band after he left Sly Stone Very weird, strange person — they all were, but fantastic musicians There's so much going on, you can't quite tell Nowadays you can get effects with vocoders and stuff, you can sing through synthesizers and get instrumental effects and so on, but this is before them and better than all that really It could be a vocoder thing [Sly] had been a disc jockey and knew a lot about studio technology It's very good, led onto Bootsy and all that sort of stuff

On some of the singles — specifically "Dance To The Music" — the bass is massively loud.

They had very eccentric mixes They'd make aesthetic decisions on each track, where to put things, who to have doing what, things coming in and out of each tune They're great art, Sly Stone's records And having been a jazz fan, it's nice hearing rhythm sections as good as the first one you played If you're brought up on rhythm sections like Mingus and Dannie Richmond then rock can seem a bit pedestrian by comparison A rhythm section like that has got the dimensions of the ins and outs that make it more interesting, more organic.

PINK FLOYD

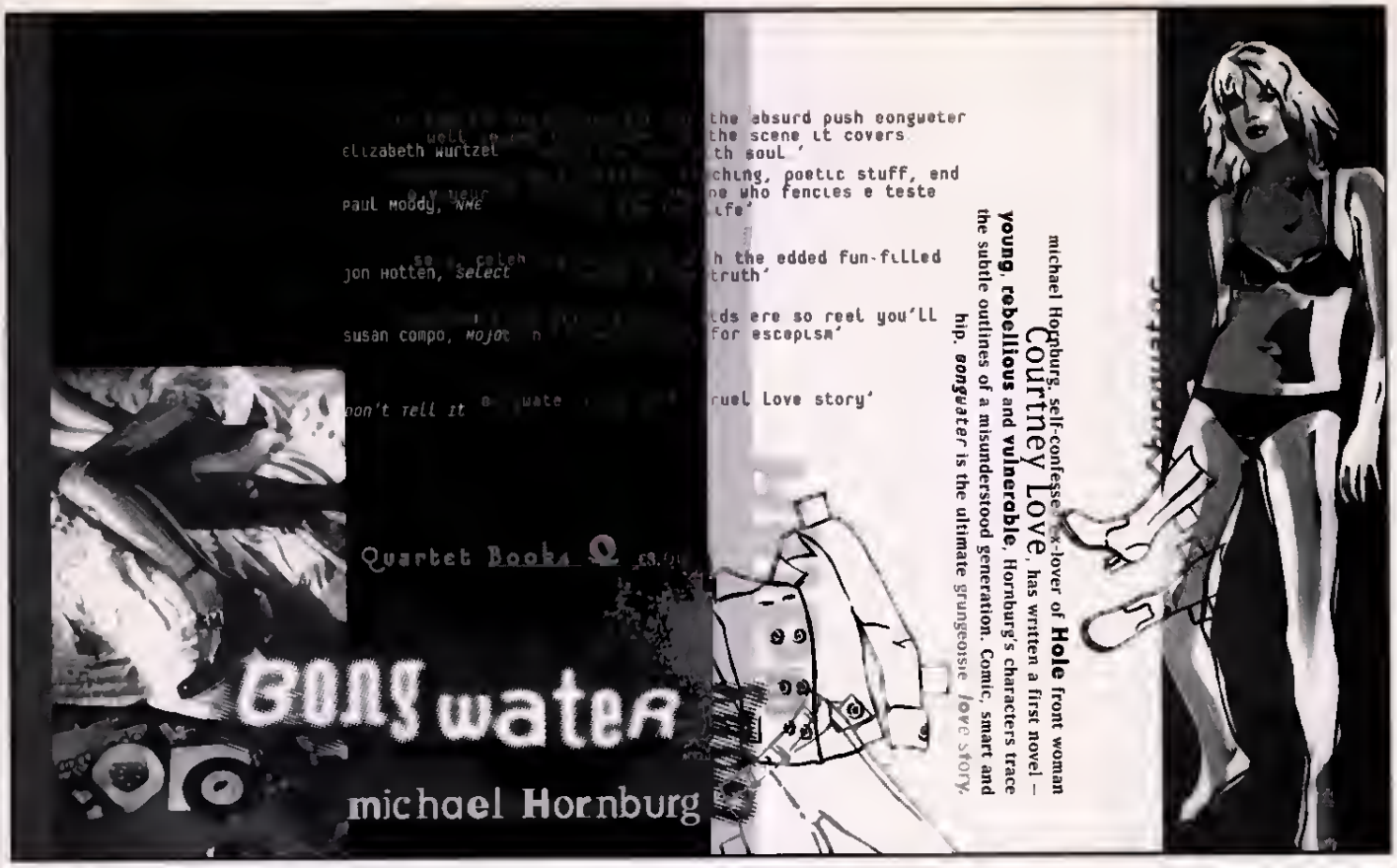
"Apples And Oranges" from *Masters Of Rock* (EMI)

Is it Barrett? Is it Jerry Shirley on drums?

It's Pink Floyd, one of the last things Barrett did with them.

I thought it was the second [Barrett] solo LP That bassline's just a major scale going downwards. It is one of the great tunes, the major scale! [At line *"thought you might like to know"*] See, that's another Beatles influence, it's exactly *Sergeant Pepper* — or it's just as likely to be other way round Paul McCartney used to listen to them [Pink Floyd]. That's lovely, it's really good As you can gather, sometimes with English musicians, I know the people without necessarily knowing the music. I didn't collect records or go to the concerts I was never a consumer I really like them and there again liked them individually as people I'm biased because they were very kind to us and to me In the early

Continued on page 67



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John Barry is one of the most influential post-war film composers: his iconoclastic scores for the James Bond movies have inspired a generation of musicians, from Portishead to John Zorn. Ben Watson talks to Barry about his pioneering use of the studio and how it formed a bridgehead between the mainstream and the avant garde

the studio system

Scratch a cult and you find a historical conjuncture, a tense knot of historical strands that resists unpicking. Film composer John Barry is currently the toast of the Easy Listening revival, the resonant twang of the guitar from "The James Bond Theme" and the extravagant sweep of minor-key strings from "The Human Jungle" both surface on Portishead's *Dummy* and numerous anonymous TripHop 12"s, EMI have issued his early work in a three volume set that looks suspiciously like a bid for cultural credibility (extensive liner notes that make musicological points, unissued "discoveries", references to "John Barry collectors and experts"), The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has — under his direction — played his scores on a new release called *Moviolo II: Action and Adventure*, you hear his music in lifestyle bars from Soho to Kreuzberg.

But it is the sheer bottled excitement of his most famous tune — "The Bond Theme" — that has attracted tributes from arrangers as diverse as Jerry Dammers, Sergei Kuryokhin and John Zorn (who once introduced Naked City's version with the words, "and here's something by a great British composer . . . no, not Brian Ferneyhough . John Barry!"). Portishead are merely the latest in a distinguished line of musicians inspired by its upfront guitar sound. The Specials, The Cramps, Sly & Robbie, Ronald Shannon Jackson, Fred Frith and Bow Wow Wow have all deployed its power and irony, its immediate recall of "bikini girls and machine guns".

Over a London-New York phone link, I asked Barry how he achieved the unique sound of the Bond soundtracks, the brass blazing out like gunfire over the speedboat guitar.

"I never really recorded legitimately. A later film score of mine like *Dances With Wolves* was very much legitimate recording, very traditional, but the Bond stuff was unusual. The studio was very much an instrument. EMI Studio One was fabulous, a shame it was pulled down. All that Bond brass sound was not tight: those brass chords, they'd take weeks to die down! People would say, 'How can you do that?' But that was the characteristic of that studio. It was very characteristic of the first Bond scores, those brash shock chords — that was a natural echo! It was an old church hall, it had all that vibrance. We used it, we went with it — if we'd tried for a legitimate classical sound we'd have needed another studio. All the early stuff was recorded there. The engineer knew the room, you made allowances for it — if you'd recorded it anywhere else, it wouldn't have sounded the same. You use the room and the engineer, it's all part of the process. The vibrance of sound is so important, the academic approach that only considers the notes is so dead."

Before The Beatles persuaded the world that pop music was about spirited vocals and winsome personalities, there had been a spate of instrumental releases that made the impact of the newly electrified guitar their very *raison d'être*. In England, Joe Meek's production for The Tornadoes and Norrie Paramor's for The Shadows put the twang centre stage (though Barry acknowledges a transatlantic source: "Duane Eddy was a great inspiration. *The Twang Is The Thang*"). It was Barry's schooled musicianship, coupled with an opportunity to provide calculated excitement for a British cinema waking up to vast post-war marketing possibilities, that led to the curious mix of the Bond theme: in-your-face electric guitar, surging big band swing and cool minor-key 'anxiety' harmonies derived from the classical tradition. His instrumentals often consisted of arrangements scored to the last note — plus an ad-libbed guitar solo by the likes of Vic Flick or Joe Brown.

'It was like who's my singer? Because there was no singer, we didn't have words, so it was designed to make it interesting, to catch, almost like a singer. It made a very distinct personality, just the sound — it's a voice, but an instrumental voice."

Collected together on a must-have EP for Columbia were four John Barry "theme successes" "The Human Jungle", "The Lolly Theme", "Cutty Sark" and "The James Bond Theme" itself The latter was actually credited to Monty Norman, 'composer' for *Dr No*, the first Bond film, but the film makers decided to stick with John Barry and his Seven for future releases like *Goldfinger* and *Thunderball* they could see that it was his interpretation and recording — rather than the score — that made the music. Barry provided that elusive combination of improvisation and care, pop and classical, commercialism amd innovation that has provided the holy grail for composers as varied (and undersung) as Marvin Gaye, Michael Mantler and Simon Fell

Born John Barry Prendergast in 1933, Barry learned to play as a boy "In York, I took piano lessons, I played Chopin The teacher never really got me into it, it was more like 'piano lessons', in quotes, we didn't get into the fine structures of music."

He studied with Dr Francis Jackson at York Minster, and took a correspondence course in big band arrangement from Bill Russo (one of Stan Kenton's arrangers) Barry's distaste for the piano lessons evidently colours his approach to composition to this day

"There was this discussion between Shostakovich and Prokofiev: Shostakovich used to call his work 'orchestrated piano music', because he was an extraordinary pianist — and I can tell with a composer today if he plays piano Shostakovich never wrote pianist's music, his are totally orchestral pieces, I think that's quite important."

The John Barry Seven sound has been characterised as 'stringbeat' (after an album Barry made for Columbia in 1961) Stringbeat uses strings to embellish rock and pop, but doesn't drown bass/drum impact in the warm, thick soup beloved of arrangers for MOR crooners What kind of precedent did he have for his string writing?

"In a pop way, I used strings for Adam Faith. It was very much Buddy Holly inspired, because Adam did not have a hard sounding voice, he had a very light sound, unlike Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran who had heavy, tough voices — Adam had a light voice like Buddy Holly's When Buddy Holly recorded he had a very light rhythm, and I emphasized that It worked for Adam"

John Barry's trademark effect — pizzicato — has become iconic Pizzicato Five, the 60s-pastiche group from Tokyo (all three members, only one of whom is female, wear miniskirts!) honour Barry's string sound in their very name But there are evidently heavier influences I asked him if the echoes of Wagner in *Thunderball* were conscious.

"Wagner is a master, fantastic operas, his operatic style was very suitable to James Bond everything was over the top!"

However, the whole tone of the Bond soundtracks is very different from the diluted orchestral romanticism favoured by Hollywood in the post-war years Was this just the input of the British beat-boom and the twangy guitars?

"The style evolved before The Beatles came along What happened in Hollywood was that by the 30s each big studio had their own orchestra — a full complement, maybe 50 musicians, that was the MGM orchestra, it was a regular, traditional orchestra England never had that. When I came up I had to do really strange things I wound up with four cellos, four alto flutes I invented the orchestra! It wasn't an orchestra I'd used before and it wasn't an orchestra I've used since On *The Ipcress File* I used the cymbalum It looks like the inside of a piano, smaller — they came in different sizes It looks like you'd taken the strings out of a piano, and you play it with fingers, some people use metal picks, but most of the time you use beaters A soft beater, sometimes metal, so it has a wide range of sounds It's a Hungarian folk instrument."

Of course there were precedents for Barry's fascination for the emotional affect of unusual sounds Indeed, the post-war avant garde composers who listened to Theodor Adorno's lectures at Darmstadt also resolved to examine timbre and sonority If one approaches the results with an ear educated by John Barry — and the film composers he admires Bernard Herrmann (*Citizen Kane*, *Psycho*), Nino Rota (*La Strada*) — you can hear the music of Boulez and Stockhausen as emotionally-charged textures rather than 'hard-to-follow' classical sonatas Innovative commercialism and abstract modernism found an unlikely common front in deserting the rules of notation in favour of the impact of sheer sound

Necessity, as so often, was the mother of invention Landed with the task of providing a musical counterpart to the brash, amoral sensationalism of the James Bond movies, Barry came up with a musical miscegenation, rather than blending the ingredients, he highlighted their contradictions The guitar's twang rips into the sophisticated melancholy of the strings with a virulence that foretells everything about the impact of vulgar Americana — and the uppity masses in general — on the traditional order of the 60s

Both avant gardists and populists — and especially those concerned to work the uneasy seam between — have been fascinated by Barry's use of forms previously condemned to generic apartheid The Bond films also provided his big break Hollywood beckoned When I spoke to him, he was at home in New York with his one year old son Jonpatrick (by a second marriage), and preparing to fly to LA the next day

"The Bond stuff was unusual. The studio was very much an instrument. It was an old church hall; if you'd recorded anywhere else it wouldn't have sounded the same"

As a boy, Barry worked as a film projectionist at his father's chain of cinemas in and around York. He insists that he has always wanted to write for films, in no way is he an art-composer renegade or a failed jazzer It is intriguing to speculate about his youthful experience in the projection room, watching audiences hypnotised by the glamour and colour unrolling before them The popularity of soundtracks for a music scene that fetishises detachment and cool suddenly seems appropriate

"Film music carries its own weight. What I like about about film music is that once the audience relate music to drama they will get it. I love writing for movies I've always

loved it, I've never felt that it was a poor relation, I don't think it's a crappy job I don't think screen writing is a crappy job either If you do it well, it's a hell of a craft People can write great screenplays, they can write great film scores, I've never thought of it in a derogatory way If Wagner was alive today he'd be writing for movies!"

In 1977 John Barry wrote the score for *The Deep*, a bizarre mix of classical ambitions and disco One side of the soundtrack album featured a 'ballet' of 'themes from the movie' — legitimate orchestra music, though hardly innovatory — while side two featured a robotic disco thud beneath Donna Summer's cybersex groanings Since then, though, he has succumbed more and more to the big-budget Hollywood preference for the 'legitimate' romantic symphony *Dances With Wolves* (1990) and the new *Moviola* CD are orchestral recordings, though you can spot the Barry trademarks — love themes with threatening harmonic nuances, urgent minor blues riffs, Wagnerian rumblings — they are hardly the stuff of legends (or manna for future cults)

The *Moviola* CD arrives with a reproduction of an oil painting on the cover It shows excited kids running home from an old fashioned cinema, everything suffused in a nostalgic glow, all the surfaces redolent of Edward Hopper The high-art packaging is indicative (a far cry from the wonderful kitsch — disco-lights as Sonia Delaunay for the masses — that graced EPs by The JB7) Barry's current output is that of a suave craftsman delivering the goods to the industry; classy orchestral homogeneity has replaced the unruly miscegenations of the 60s

In the 20th century, modern art and avant garde music have been notoriously stimulated and extended by chance, by improvisation and by admixtures of the incompatible John Barry's career shows that maybe even the commercial mainstream needs recourse to those creative springs Maybe that's why "The James Bond Theme" still works like a sonic infusion from the jugular □

Moviola II *and the third volume of* John Barry The EMI Years *have just been released on Epic and EMI respectively*

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charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Inner Visions 15

NuYorican Soul — Mind Fluid (Talkin' Loud)
Pharoah Sanders — Message From Home (Verve)
Lamb — Cotton Wool (Fila Brazilia mix) (Slate)
Smoke City — Underwater Love (Slate)
Courtney Pine — I've Known (4 Hero/Pressure Drop) (Talkin' Loud)
Alex Reece — Feel The Sunshine (Blunted)
Nicolette — No Government/You Are Heaven Sent (Talkin' Loud)
Carl Craig — Bug In The Bassbin (Mo' Wax)
Gregory Fleckner Quintet — Monkey Boots (Clear)
Francois K — Hypnodelic (white label)
UFO — Loud Minority (Alex Reece remix) (Talkin' Loud)
PM Dawn — My Own Personal Gravity (Gee Street)
Fugees — Take The Mics (white label)
DJ Krush/Roots — Meiso (4 Hero remix) (Mo' Wax)
Aqua Sky — various cuts (Slate)
Compiled by Gilles Peterson, Inner Visions, *Sundays 8-11 pm, Kiss 100*

Piccadilly Records 15

Phil Miller/Gower/Sinclair/Tomkins — Before A Word Is Said (Voiceprint)
Peter Hammill — Peel Sessions (Strange Fruit)
Tunde Jegede — Lamentation (Triciom)
Rocket From The Crypt — Scream Dracula Scream (Headhunter)
Boss Hogg — Boss Hogg (Geffen)
Passengers — Original Soundtracks 1 (Island)
DJ Krush — Meiso (Mo' Wax)
Tricky — Brand New You're Retro (Alex Reece mix) (Island)
Towering Inferno — Kaddish (Island)
Ishen Sound — King Size Dub (Hypoxia)
Larceny — Who Are You? (Aqua Sky/Sleuth mix) (Phonic)
Old Blind Dog — Legacy (Lochshore)
Katia Labeque — Little Girl Blue (Dreyfus)
Various — Respect To Studio One (Heartbeat)
VM Bhatt/Jerry Douglas — Bourbon & Rosewater (Water Lily)
Compiled by John, Piccadilly Records, 5-7 Brown Street, Manchester

WNUR 15

John Coltrane —Stellar Regions (Impulse!)
Brötzmann/Kondo/Parker/Drake — Die Like a Dog (FMP)
Cowws Quintet — Grooves 'N' Loops (FMP)
Strange Pursuit — The Zone (Red Hook Records)
Clusone Trio — I Am An Indian (Gramavision)
Reggie Workman — Cerebral Caverns (Postcards)
Dave Douglas's Tiny Bell Trio — Constellations (hat HUT)
Brad Goode — Brad Goode (Sunlight)
Teddy Edwards Octet — Back To Avalon (Contemporary)
Big John Patton — Blue Planet Man (Evidence)
Christy Doran/John Wolf Brennan — Henceforward (Leo Lab)
Pigpen — Miss Ann (Tim/Kerr)
Charles McPherson — Come Play With Me (Arabesque)
Various — Wavelength Infinity A Sun Ra Tribute (Rastascan)
Vario-34 — Vano-34 (Blue Tower)
Compiled by Jim Zanghi, WNUR Radio, Evanston, IL

In Vivo 10

Chris & Cosey — Twist (T&B Vinyl)
Von Magnet — Cosmogania (Tangram)
Bill Laswell/Atom Heart/Tetsu Inoue — Second Nature (Fax)
Normally Invisible — Always Ultra With Wings/Psychotronics EP (Staalplaat)
Various — Mind The Gap Vol 3 (Gonzo Circus)
Ø — Atomit (Sahko)
Aphex Twin — Donkey Rhubarb (Warp)
Various — The Sound Works Exchange (Shinkansen)
Anemongurt — Wo Die Ebenen Gerglattet Sind (Dragnet)
Le Forbici Di Manitu — Quadrivelogue (Disturbance)
Compiled by Philipe Gusching, In Vivo, *Radio Béton*

The Office Ambience

Roxy Music — The Thrill Of It All (Virgin)
Various — Ocean Of Sound (Virgin)
Yma Sumac — Live In Concert 1961 (Eject)
Scanner — Sulphur (Sub Rosa)
Soft Machine — Live In Fran[illegible]
Various — Snare Pressu[illegible]
Harold Budd/Hector [illegible] (Made To Measure)
Paul Bowles — The Sheltering [illegible] (Meta)
John Barry — The EMI Years [illegible] (EMI)
Various — [illegible]tions (Lo Recordings)
Foul Play [illegible]cted (Moving Shadow)
Simon Fisher Turner — Nadja (Gyroscope)
Stephan Wittwer — Choice-Chase (Intakt)
Paul Bley Quartet — Speechless (Steeplechase)
Doldrums — Secret Life Of Machines (VHF)
L Subramaniam — Masters Of Raga (Wergo)
Compiled by The Wire *Sound System*

Pharoah Sanders

PHOTO JEAN-MARC BIRRAUX

sound check

December's choicest CDs and albums — reviewed, revered, reviled

December winners:
Weather Report, *Snare Pressure* and *Highly Recommended*, Toumani Diabate

In soundcheck:
Being, Peter Blegvad, Can, Cocteau Twins, Coil, John Coltrane, Foul Play, Grateful Dead, Jonathan Harvey, Hugh Hopper, Ken Ishii, Merzbow, Evan Parker, Passengers, Jorge Reyes, Scanner, Soft Machine, Yma Sumac, Henry Threadgill, Simon Fisher Turner, The Upsetter and more...

In brief:
Decoding the new Electronica releases

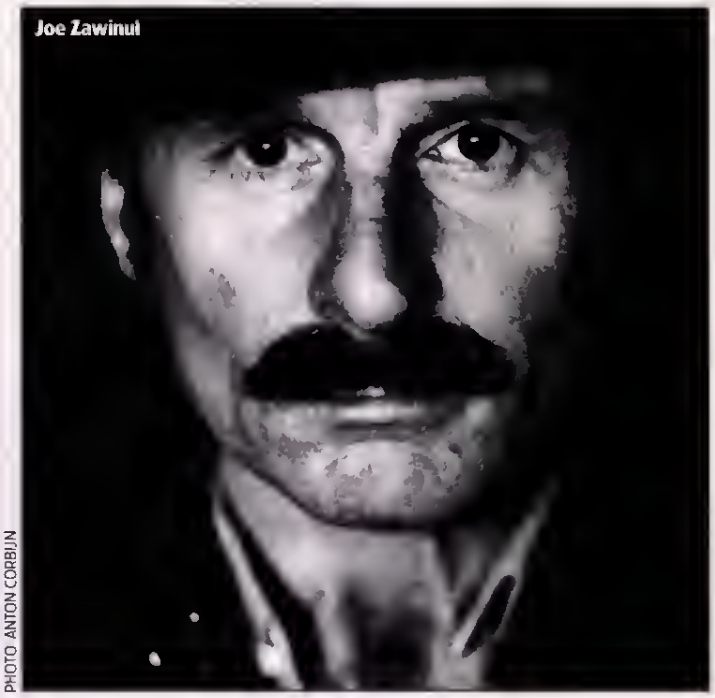
Joe Zawinul

PHOTO ANTON CORBIJN

WIRE WINNER

the dark side of fusion

Weather Report
Live In Tokyo
SONY SRCS 7174 5 CD

It's easy to forget, but fuck, Weather Report had some *energy*. And some *grace*. Here's a reminder: an essential reissue, albeit as a Japanese import only, of *Live In Tokyo*: the group at the height of their powers, recorded at Tokyo's Shibuya Philharmonic Hall in January 1972.

Joe Zawinul's eventual capitulation to the fusion fast buck in the mid-70s has tended to eclipse the group's early work. For whatever reasons — the inevitable public boredom with Acid Jazz or the apparent obsession with 70s African-American music — after years in the critical badlands, jazz rock is enjoying a welcome reappraisal. Ironically, Weather Report, once the stars of the genre, could well miss out on the (re)action. More's the pity, as *Live In Tokyo* easily demonstrates that no one, not even Hancock, not Mahavishnu, certainly not Corea, and even on occasion, not even Miles, could equal this group.

One can debate for ever what eventually did for jazz rock, but the increasing tendency of musicians in the 70s to over-compose is a likely reason. The trouble with Zawinul, McLaughlin, Hancock and especially with Corea was that they were all hugely gifted writers. Without exception, by the mid-70s the initially astonishing fusions — no, *meltdowns* — these musicians could execute would be lost among all the dazzlingly complex but stifling writing. (Miles, as ever, was the exception: he was never a truly gifted composer — his musical methods were far more arcane than mere *composition* — and his development throughout the 70s retained a freedom his alumni lost.)

This group miraculously avoided this pitfall. It's the definitive Weather Report line-up: Zawinul, Wayne Shorter and Miroslav Vitous with the dual percussion onslaught of Eric Gravatt and Don Um Romao. Where the group would become renowned — and reviled — for its layering of electronic textures (Zawinul's *and* Shorter's), here the exoticism is on a tight rein: a bit of ring modulation and fuzz on the piano here, a bit of berimbau there. And Zawinul's writing (and, for that matter, Shorter's and Vitous's) is kept in touch too, typically patched into a series of long medleys. These are really bare skeletons around which hang improvisations as close to free jazz as jazz rock could get, with Zawinul's polyglot melodies at their most sinuous, Shorter's blowing at its most ragged and the rhythm section twisting from the freest rubato to the most heartstopping riffs.

This group would go on, a year later, to record the towering *Sweetnighter*, one of the most overlooked of all jazz rock albums. That record's mesmerising, dark funk grooves and skeletal melodies find some of their precedents in this crucial live set.

SIMON HOPKINS

WIRE WINNER

high pressure frontin'

Various Artists
Snare Pressure
PTERODACTYL dBASSCD01 CD/MC

Various Artists
Highly Recommended
FORMATION FORM 003 CD/LP

It's becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with the viral multiplication of Jungle compilations — titles come and go in a blur of red, gold and green, each collection recycling and adulterating the anthems, combining them with inferior specimens whose frailty is often cloaked in a big-name remix. These two records buck the trend by focusing on the work of individual labels, and they're interesting because they illustrate just how broad a church drum 'n' bass has become.

Pterodactyl Records are obscure even

by the standards of a genre where opaque slang and anonymity are standard practice. Understandably so, given their idiosyncratic approach to the music. It has to be said that elements of Jungle have, perhaps inevitably, become more formulaic in 1995, and labels and artists which steer clear of the herd are likely to pay the price of missing out on the limelight. But as many of the tracks on the sterling *Snare Pressure* collection demonstrate, the benefits of non-conformity outweigh the problems. The tempo here is slower, closer to the speed of 92/93 hardcore, but with the edgy *Streetsounds* darkness of the Old School replaced by a more lyrical melancholy. The outrageous percussion fills that dominate Phase III's "Fearful Dimension" have a dream-like clarity, like a high board diver executing complex twists in flickering slow motion. Similar in mood is "Herb" by Dub Culture which appears to be pioneering the new genre of Gregorian hardcore — mournful maritime horns and snatches of plainsong resonate behind quasi-military cyberbeats. Best of all is the ultra-choppy, ultra-strange "Rhythm By Numbers" from Strange Attractors, where shivering Morricone strings and a child-like three note melody are torn apart by malicious beats and a marauding Electro bassline.

Formation Records are at the other end of the scale in terms of profile, but the quality control factor operates just as strongly on their *Highly Recommended* collection. The masterly DJ SS features on six of the tracks, and his trademark blend of brutally ruff bass and beguiling flumes of high frequency sound is unerringly effective. Under the (startlingly apposite) name Sound Of The Future, he's produced the best tune here — the VIP mix of "The Lighter". Every buzz in the book is packed into six minutes of Hardcore heaven as a skewed take on "Für Elise" gets sliced up in a whirl of scything percussion. Rapt jouissance and the energy of unrestrained play make this tune a perfect specimen of Jungle at its finest — a bewildering flickerframe collage of mental and sonic connections wiring and rewiring the elements of the mix. Here, and throughout the LP, moments of casual electricity flash past, unremembered and unrepeated, bound together only by the breakneck groove. Highly Recommended, indeed.

CHRIS SHARP

Label Contacts A-Z

Further consumer info: labels not named in this column should be available at good specialist retailers or, increasingly, in high street Megastores like HMV, Tower and Virgin. In emergencies, contact likely distributors such as These, RTM, Impetus, Recommended, Vital, etc. . .

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WIRE WINNER

string driven dreams

Toumani Diabate
Djelika
HANNIBAL HNCD 1380 CD

With *Kora*, his solo album from 1988, Toumani Diabate reinterpreted the role and function of the kora in modern African music. Injecting new levels of sheer virtuosity and a highly developed compositional approach, he showed just what a flexible and powerful instrument the West African harp could be outside of its more traditional ensemble or accompaniment roles. Since then, as a member of the Afro-flamenco group Songhai and as an initiator of several cross-genre ensemble projects, he has become one of the most respected and experimental of West Africa's instrumentalists.

Djelika, which features Songhai's bassist Danny Thompson, the legendary balafon virtuoso Keletigui Diabate and ngoni-lute man Basekou Kouyate, explores classical West African sounds reinterpreted by musicians whose ears and musical experience are wider than most. Diabate wisely allows the musicians a great deal of space to stretch out in his arrangements and the result is significantly different from any West African music I've heard.

It is obvious that these musicians come from improvisatory traditions and are closely acquainted with jazz and with a whole range of American, African and World sounds and see no reason not to let all they have heard and experimented with come out spontaneously in their playing. 'Music' is probably the best word for this mysterious collective process and, given leave to have its own say, this music frequently departs from strictly Malian traditions and goes places for which there are no definitions or need of definitions. But there is nothing sloppy or throwaway about *Djelika*. The musicians' interaction and collective fascination with each other is as disciplined and detailed as it could be, while the economy and directness of their play is often remarkable. Like *Kaira*, *Djelika* is a very rich record which reveals different layers of activity with each repeated listen. It has its sights firmly set on the future.

RICHARD SCOTT

Being
Special Emissions Volumes 1-3
EMISSIONS STATIC SE001/002/003 3EP

Being
Tides
SPACEFROG TSF9009 CD

22 year old Scot Dave Being is currently the subject of intense discussion on several Techno Internet newsgroups. Rarely has a new artist generated such a level of interest, and these releases provide the opportunity to see what all the fuss is about.

The *Special Emissions* series paints a portrait of an artist partially in crisis: a man who's unsure whether he wants to be Carl Craig (the warm, Detroit-influenced synths of "Flee" and "McLaren"), part of the Sahko collective (the minimal machine song of "Live" and "Noon") or something in between ("Ayemooth"). Such stylistic divergence could be seen as a refusal to be trammelled by unnecessary generic hair-splitting. Personally, I put it down to a lack of confidence in his musical identity. It's certainly nothing to do with his technical skills. In fact, what this series highlights, above all else, is the complete unsuitability of vinyl for this kind of music. Working right across the tonal spectrum, Being has chosen a medium unable to cope with the more extreme colours of his sonic palette, particularly at the dark (bass) end.

Tides is an altogether more cohesive affair. Originally conceived as a live set, it carries within it a sense of innate pacing, reflecting simultaneously the ebb and flow of the seas, the dramatic necessity imposed by a performance context and the reality of music whose existence relies on the pulse of alternating current.

Centrepiece of the album is the mammoth 21 minute title track. Beginning in the shallows, where synth waves lap gently at the water's edge, it moves into deeper, darker waters, suddenly diving beneath the surface and heading for the ocean depths, where all sense of temporal and spatial awareness become distorted and irrelevant.

The aquatic metaphor is an apt one. Here, Being solves the problem of identity by dispensing with it altogether, liquefying his music and allowing it to follow its own current, pushed and pulled by the sinewaves within his

machinery The result is fluid Electronica, capable of filling any vessel his imagination cares to shape. *Tides* is the sound of an artist standing on the shore of an ocean of possibilities

PETER McINTYRE

Biomuse
Wrong
LANGUAGE WORD P2 CD/LP

Industrial music has become a contemporary joke the last refuge of groups whose only cultural contribution is in adding to the list of ever more ludicrous 'shocking' group names Experience tells us that there are things more disturbing in this world than middle class noise terrorists — although admittedly the music can be as painful as a particularly sadistic scrotal torture session Anyone with any ideas is looking beyond the genre's parameters, and increasingly groups like Front Line Assembly are exploring more technoid avenues

In Biomuse's take on Industrial process, they remind us that Aphex Twin's "Ventolin" is sonically closer to the claustrophobic aural assault course of a group such as 70 Gwen Party than B12 The Italian duo pitch themselves somewhere in the middle and flit from dance to heavy industry as required, collecting the good bits and bolting them together to produce hybrids like the metallic, splintered, springheeled funk of "Sine God"

"Convolvotron", the standout track, really sounds like nothing else Starting as a loopy, gloopy, hi-velocity Techno rollercoaster with *concrète*-style sonic wedges driven into it, the track runs through a series of disorientating time changes. TripHop grooves that shift into ultra-heavy, club-footed funk into breakbeats that sound like they're played on massed biscuits tins Faust and John Oswald running riot come to mind

Elsewhere, brief snatches of rock guitar, sax and keyboards appear before all bearings are inevitably lost again in the feral din Rhythm is ditched completely at times "Very Approximately" visits the same frightening nightscapes that yielded Pere Ubu's "Thriller", and "Wrong" is a multi-tape loop mash-up running on eccentric orbits

MIKE BARNES

Peter Blegvad
Just Woke Up
RER RECOMMENDED PB2 CD

John Greaves
Songs
RESURGENCE RES 112 CD

It must be 20 years since I emerged from the local Record Library (that public sector goldmine for checking out sounds you were intrigued by but didn't want to risk cash on) clutching a Henry Cow LP I knew from my assiduous scouring of the *NME* that it wasn't going to be easy listening, but that same source had convinced me that it was time to push myself towards horizons beyond KC And The Sunshine Band These days I'd reject the snobbery implied by that 'beyond' ("Get Down Tonight" still thrills in a way undreamed of by "In Praise Of Learning") but exposure to the likes of the Cow, as they were probably never known, was crucial in revealing how broad this thing called music could be 20 years on it's heartening to see that Blegvad and Greaves, two of Henry's calves, show no signs of narrowing yet.

"Please be simple, please be direct" is the opening line of the title track of Peter Blegvad's sixth solo album, a request he goes on to half obey and half ignore The music is excitingly simple and direct, almost folky if that word didn't imply a corduroyed antiquananism utterly at odds with the tart, wry songs that fill *Just Woke Up* They also owe much to Country, but purged of its over-production and hectoring sentimentality Blegvad reaches back beyond those 'qualities' in search of the finger-picking dexterity of bluegrass and the relish in storytelling that Country shares with the blues His stories, though, are far too haunted and twitchy for an inhabitant of contemporary Nashville to attempt (though Johnny Cash might have some dark fun with "Driver's Seat"), since it's the album's lyrics which flout the call for simplicity and directness

Full of surreal dream-logics and dripping with death, dread and menace, Blegvad's words achieve the almost impossible balancing act of being simultaneously opaque and involving. They involve due to the fact that even if the language is dense and florid (when did you last hear a song that boasted 'bathysphere' in its lyrics?), the mood of each song, its drift, is generously clear "You And Me" sparkles with the fired-up rhetorical excess of the newly fallen-in-love, while "Just Woke Up" has a single-mindedly paranoid resentment of the world at large that The Jesus And Mary Chain might envy The one flaw with the album is Blegvad's voice, which can be colourless and apt to veer into unnecessarily Dylan-like inflections Chris Cutler's drumming, conversely, is a constant delight — exact, crisp and purposeful

John Greaves plays bass on *Just Woke Up*, and Blegvad has written many of the lyrics for *Songs* It seems, though, that he kept the best ones for his own album, since *Songs* is full of verbal trickeries (perpetrated by Greaves himself) that impress intellectually but never really connect on any less cerebral level "Kew Rhone", for example, is entirely made up of puns, homonyms, anagrams and palindromes, and is as little fun as that sounds, while "L'Aise Aux Ex-Sans-Trique" wastes its yearningly lovely melody on lyrics which tell the story of the making of the album itself Such archness culminates in the irritating "Eccentric Waters", billed as "an opera in three acts and two minutes"

Songs is beautifully played and, appropriately, sung, by a battery of guest vocalists including Robert Wyatt. Multi-tracked on "The Song" into a folornly determined army, Wyatt shows how powerful this record could have been if only Greaves had weaned himself off the donnish wit As *Just Woke Up* proves, you can be clever without being a smart arse

ANDY MEDHURST

Bruire
L'Âme De Objet
AMBIANCES MAGNETIQUES AM034 CD

Diane Labrosse
Face Cachée Des Choses
AMBIANCES MAGNETIQUES AM036 CD

Joane Hétu
Castor Et Compagnie
AMBIANCES MAGNETIQUES AM037 CD

Three CDs from the fertile and determinedly independent Quebec New Music scene (documented in Andrew Jones's recent book *Plunderphonics, 'Pataphysics & Pop Mechanics*)

Bruire were formed in 1989 by Michel

STEVE LACY

PACKET

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IRENE AEBI VOICE
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EIGHT SONGS BY JUDITH MALINA
AND ONE BY JULIAN BECK

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F Côté (drums and live electronics). *L'Âme De Objet* is their fourth album. Martin Tétreault's turntables create Bruire's 'stranger' sonic textures, though not that strange if you're familiar with vinyl fry-up surface noise, reverse motion and varispeed jump-cutting. Everywhere, there's a glazed, distanced quality to the group's playing that is hard to engage with; the jazz-influenced saxes and trumpet sound self-consciously cool, even the coarser textures seem stripped of their immediate physicality. Everything is in its place, but there's a noticeable absence of spirit.

Diane Labrosse and Joane Hétu have been carving out solid reputations in the Quebec experimental groups Wondeur Brass, Les Poules and Justine since the mid-80s. Now both women have completed debut solo albums.

Face Cachée Des Choses by Labrosse is for digital sampler and "recorded ambiances". Listing the sources, piece by piece, from which these 13 compositions have been constructed is not a good idea, not only does it encourage the listener to become involved in an unnecessary game of 'spot the source material', it also demystifies the transformation of meaning that occurs when the sounds of everyday objects and animal noises are manipulated and recontextualised as part of a musical composition. But it's particularly refreshing to hear a composer working with *concrète*/electroacoustic techniques who still enjoys identifiable rhythm and melody, and linear development. "Dali", with its disorientating use of tick-tock rhythms, correlates effectively with the surrealist's preoccupation with dream-states and melting time zones, "Nénuphar" sculpts its sources (including the sound of crickets) into the backdrop of a haunting folk song. These accessible and ingenious pieces would certainly work as soundtracks to the surreal animations of film-makers like Borowczyk and Svankmajer, where there's a comparable fascination for revealing the hidden 'lives' of everyday objects.

Diane Labrosse and reedsman Jean Derome (another member of Bruire) also appear on Joane Hétu's solo debut *Castor Et Compagnie*, "A cycle of songs for lovers of senses, sense and sounds, noise and lyricism, pleasure and eroticism" — which should cover just about all of us. The album lives up to its eclectic promise without compromising its innovative impulse, mixing mainstream and free jazz with avant rock and pop ballads (with lyrics in French), offering a colourful diet of challenging music spiced with romance and humour — the brilliantly structured "Histoirs À Dormir" somehow manages to include all of these ingredients and still remain tasteful. Highly recommended.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

CMP: through Vital

December Dawn: through DOR

ECM: through New Note

Eject: through Discovery

Emissions: through Vital

Expanding: PO Box 13D, Loughton, Essex IG10 1AY

Extreme: through SAM/Vital

Formation: through SRD

Fredag Nouveux: through Pinnacle

Can
The Peel Sessions

STRANGE FRUIT CD 135 CD

These six extended workouts were recorded between 1973 and 1975, the period when (as some think) Can began going soft. Slabs of improvisation presumably 'treated' rather less than those released on official Can LPs, and not originally programmed to appear as a single LP, they run in the order they were first broadcast (months and sometimes years apart). Perhaps the Irmin Schmidt quote on the cover ("There is no Can piece that is finished . . .") functions as an apology in advance, as if they felt there are things you're entitled to expect that you won't find.

If so, the apology's not really necessary. Sure, a couple of the pieces outstay their welcome, as their lengths in minutes creep towards double figures. Pieces take time to get going, the early run-in sections being the ones a 'proper' Can release would have sliced straight out. The pre-agreed framework intrudes more than it ever does in 'official' Can, and as a result, in a couple of places (as sections end and chord changes beckon) they sound like Barrett-era Pink Floyd. Elsewhere, they briefly resemble The Velvet Underground, The Doors, Mike Oldfield, perhaps even Dire Straits. The songtitles are rather lacklustre ("Tape Kebab", "Tony Wanna Go", "Mighty Girl"). The seams show.

Above all, the individual is on display here, as if the BBC mix were intent on highlighting solos rather than collective texture. Every track contains sterling playing from at least one Can member at some point, but they rarely achieve the telepathic unity of their best recordings, nor that uniquely uncanny simultaneity of mood-shift — where all are responding to each other's ideas so fully and so aptly that the individual vanishes entirely within the group consciousness.

But a different kind of revelation is after all what we've come to expect from Strange Fruit: a glimpse into the inner workings of the concept when its proponents are maybe not on best behaviour — in an unusual environment, though relaxed and among friends, as it were. After a while, Damo Suzuki's endless, incomprehensible babble on "Up The Bakerloo Line With Annie" begins to sound like Vic and Bob singing 'in the club style' (George Daws is no Jaki Liebezeit, though). Schmidt's Wakeman-esque broken chords in "Mighty Girl" are a Bad Idea. Beginnings and endings are uniformly less interesting than middles. But knowing that they can sometimes shade a little towards the tiresome isn't as disheartening as you'd think. It reaffirms how on it they were when they were on it, intuitive masters of the edit.

MARK SINKER

Cocteau Twins
Twinlights

FONTANA CTCD/CTT 3 CD/EP

Cocteau Twins
Otherness

FONTANA 852 159 CD/EP

If anyone cared to compile a database of adjectives used to describe The Cocteau Twins' work over their long career, there would be few surprises. 'Dreamy', 'ethereal', 'flowing' would certainly be in the top five. Then, depending on the range of synonyms available, 'oneiric', 'fluting', 'ghostly' might be hauled out of the dictionary to support the descriptive paralysis that is liable to afflict any reviewer faced with a new Twins set.

Are there any new words left when it comes to The Cocteau Twins? Is it worth looking for any? Probably not, unless Elizabeth Frazer and Robin Guthrie suddenly blow a fuse and start doing Jungle mixes. These two four-track EPs seem secure in their dreamy (etc) status. Especially *Otherness*, an Ambient EP which, considering the lack of decisiveness that often characterises the Twins' sound, is by comparison perversely dynamic. Frazer's vocals are typically subsumed, her words a far away murmur. In textural terms alone, this actually works rather well. There's a certain subliminal catchiness, an intimacy, about tracks like "Feet Like

Fins" or "Cherry Coloured Funk". It's alluring in the way that a warm isolation tank made for two might be.

All well and good, but what direction is such music heading? Does it have to go anywhere? Is their peculiar stasis merely a holding device in which nothing happens, other than a minor vortex? I suspect so, especially as their devotees talk about the group in terms of affect rather than effect. However, *Twinlights* may produce some reactions. Frazer's contribution is foregrounded — you can even hear some of the lyrics, although the places where it sounds as if she speaks in tongues are less interesting than one may suppose. "Half-Gifts", the EP's closing track, contains some fine string quartet arrangements, but the song soon falls into the familiar mould. There is, ultimately, little to hold a listener's attention unless, of course, the attention was never there in the first place. As music to aid free association or other such contemplative states, this should probably be considered an achievement of sorts.

LOUISE GRAY

Coil
Unnatural History II
THRESHOLD HOUSE LOCI CD10 CD

Coil
Windowpane And The Snow
THRESHOLD HOUSE LOCI CD7 CD

Coil tracks are like homing pigeons. No matter where they're sent, they always end up returning to the source. They might sell the same birds over and over, but they rarely sit so happily as they do in the context of Coil's own compilations, the latest of which is *Unnatural History II*. Placed together like this, tracks that sounded throwaway elsewhere come across as ongoing experiments, intriguing sketches for songs later realised on official Coil albums. Away from the glare of a full release is where you'll hear Coil at their most adventurous, deliciously deranged or truly, madly, deeply fucked. Take the 11 minutes of "Another Brown World". It opens with a cross-pun of themselves and Eno, but the backwards-sliding tapes ease the piece way past its pastiche starting point into a wholly other space of gently eddying rhythm and weirdness, its precarious equilibrium offset by a Frippish guitar buzz.

Elsewhere, movie commissions are used as testing grounds for mood-altering sound manipulation. The two *Blue* themes — stick out the lengthy pause following the second for a dub coda that is part funeral rite and part wake — contrast dark premonition with thriller pacing. And the Hollywood-rejected *Hellraiser* themes that occupy most of this set paradoxically showcase the group at its most workaday functional and gut-churningly obsessive.

Bringing together two hard-to-get EPs, featuring their greatest non-hits and spin-off remixes, *Windowpane* is a reminder that very occasionally Papa knows best, and what ain't broke don't need fixing. The Balance-Christopherson dancing-dot pointillist versions of "The Snow" far outshine the Jack Dangers takes. And though the three "Windowpanes" each isolate and explore a particular aspect of the loveliest psychedelic song since "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds", summarised in the 24-carat couplet *"Gold is the sky in concentrate/Power in its purest state"*, it climaxes loud and longest in the original take, where the high-flying lyric is ravaged by a bass part slung so low the stars you're seeing are sparks sent up by its balls scraping the floor. Those still unconvinced by Coil's magic should start here.

BIBA KOPF

John Coltrane
Stellar Regions
IMPULSE! IMP 11692 CD

These are the great man's last available musical statements. Eight tracks, plus three alternate takes, constituting everything recorded on 15 February 1967, all but one — "Offering" — never before issued.

Coltrane was already suffering from the liver cancer that would kill him five months later. Two years had passed since the monumental innovations of works such as *Ascension*, *Kulu Se Mama* and *Live In Seattle*. The explosive propulsion of Elvin Jones and the juddering chord-slabs of McCoy Tyner from Coltrane's classic quartet have been replaced here by the almost meditative control of Rashied Ali on drums and Alice Coltrane on piano. The irreplaceable Jimmy Garrison remains on bass.

The title track, a miniature at three and a half minutes, is typical of these takes: it feels like a lyrical studio sketch, a template for one of Coltrane's increasingly extended, trance-like live performances. But then he starts squealing away at the high notes as if straining to get through to some impossible state of emotional relase, and we are back on familiar ground.

As always, Coltrane sets wild fury against moments of deep contemplation. "Seraphic Light" opens with, and eventually returns to, the sanctuary of a slow-motion, heart-sinkingly sad tenor refrain. It's with "Offering" that he really gets going on one of his through-the-roof upsurges. Against Ali's simple scatter-rhythm, Coltrane goes off in a continuously inventive, utterly unpredictable line. You can feel he's once again back in full intense flow.

Overall this is a very reflective, even introspective Coltrane (on "Tranesonic" — all the tracks were titled long after the event by Alice — it sounds like he abandons the physical weight of the tenor for the more ambiguous tones of an alto sax). His work always seemed a struggle to conjure beauty and grace from a background of political and social crisis. And how many artists are as lovable as Coltrane was? Maybe it's best to think of this collection as evidence of a soulful man going out in peace.

ROBERT CLARK

Vanessa Daou
Zipless
MCA 11278 CD

It's now some 20 years since novelist and poet Erica Jong first formulated the "zipless fuck" (I never quite understood what this actually was, other than a general and non-site specific definition of eroticism), and, like all arresting ideas, it has lived on. Created by singer Vanessa Daou, in close musical collaboration with husband Peter, *Zipless*, subtitled *Songs Of Abandon From The Erotic Poetry Of Erica Jong*, and originally released in the US earlier this year, is an album that explores several layers simultaneously. Its ten songs are settings of erotic poems from Jong's *Becoming Light* collection, in which the Daous aim to replicate the poetry's fluidity and nuance by creating a music which is as delicate as it is insistent.

Given that the music alone is not so original as to be startling, this pairing works astonishingly well. Peter Daou specialises in what might be termed a cool, smokey blue, electronic jazz fusion

plenty of vibes, keyboards and sax mark out a linear approach to a music which never obscures Vanessa Daou's voice The voice has certain parallels — one is reminded of Julee Cruise (although Daou has nothing of her frailty), of Leslie Winer's *Witch* record, minus the dub space, of (even) Marianne Faithfull — but it is also breathy, seductive in its whispers, strong in its modulations In music, as in lyric, there is a dynamic atmosphere which reflects Jong's original observations of the subtleties that sensuousness employs This works especially well on tracks such as "Dear Anne Sexton" (*"My dearest Anne/I love a man"*) in which love transcends sexuality, although never time, and "My Love Is Too Much", with its violin lines and gentle dance beats

An indicator of how sensitively Daou handles her lines is the appearance, for one track only, of Jong herself, reading "Smoke" One barely pauses between the two voices, such is their ability to blend While many performers have sought to integrate the sense of an explicit eroticism with music (Madonna has managed this on occasion rather well), Daou achieves her synthesis by a certain relaxation of style In the oblique touch of the music and lyric, *Zipless* manages to be both sexy and smart

LOUISE GRAY

Foul Play
Suspected
MOVING SHADOW 2 CD/LP

Foul Play, aka Steve Bradshaw and John Morrow, have established themselves alongside Omni Trio, Goldie and D'Cruze as pioneers of subtle and progressive drum 'n' bass tracks and remixes aimed as much at home listening as the megawatt arena soundsystems. They have developed a lighter and more optimistic sound than most, more playful, less obsessive than Goldie and Dillinja's dark aesthetics or D'Cruze's more detached manipulations These beats skip along unapologetically on a wave of forward motion avoiding much of the genre's sense of skidding and stuttering dislocation

Although Bradshaw and Morrow offer an easier ride, that sense of tension and semi-release so crucial to drum 'n' bass is firmly maintained, but it is very much coded in and integral to the beats, which are rarely subject to violent interruption of the kind that a Dillinja or DJ Trace might favour The high pressure hardstep sense of claustrophobia is all but absent too, and tracks such as "The Stepper", "Cuttin' Loose" and "Strung Out", busy though they are, contain a lot of space

Foul Play's fizzing, oxygenated breakbeat rushes combine with synthetic surfaces evocative of airport interior design or Hong Kong shopping malls, a simultaneous confirmation and denial of gravity that gives all the music here a distinct identity Sometimes this gloss goes too far for me and I can't hear anything in the bliss-out synths of "Artificial Intellegence" or the TripHop-like "Night Moves", though they do provide some relief from the heady BPM counts of "Total Control" (remixed by Origin Unknown, aka Andy C) and "Re-Open Your Mind" (remixed by Hopa and Rob Playford)

Though several tracks display a sense of correctness of timbre unusual in drum 'n' bass, the sounds of metal, wood and plastic are nowhere mixed and cut with such effectiveness as in "The Stepper", while Hopa & Bones's remix of "Being With You" deserves a prize for sheer dub 'n' bass inventiveness — a masterpiece of understated, hissing, mechanical malice which leaves me blinking with surprise and anticipation about how far and quickly this music has developed, and where the hell it might be heading next.

RICHARD SCOTT

Grateful Dead Records: through Terrapin Trucking Co

Gyroscope: Caroline Records, 114 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001, USA

Hannibal: through Vital

Hemiola: through Vital

Impetus: through Impetus

Impulse!: through New Note

Incoming: through Pinnacle

Incus: 14 Downs Road, London E5 8DS

Gateway
Homecoming
ECM 1562 CD

This prodigal return of one of fusion's most illustrious line-ups has won immediate and unanimous endorsement from critics worldwide Rightly so the music on *Homecoming* dares to maintain a simplistic 70s format in the face of the genre's mounting technocratic fixations John Abercrombie (guitar), Jack DeJohnette (drums) and Dave Holland (bass) take up the runes again with chastening brilliance, less as soloists than as disciplined parts of a disciplined whole

It's interesting to compare Abercrombie's work here to that of Pat Metheny who recorded with Holland and DeJohnette at the start of the decade And with the chime of ride cymbal and bass which kicks off the opening "Gateway" into a rolling, Jarrettesque bassline, the emphasis seems to be Methenywards — balancing abstract impressionism with friendly funk, hoedown lyricism and professional polish But the album then returns to the austere Gateway interplay of old This is perennially intuitive and exemplary, with each member first underpinning soloists and then scurrying off alone to map out changes of direction in melody or tempo

Between the highlights, however, particularly the roughhouse riffing of "How's Never" and "Modern Times" and DeJohnette's piano-led "Oneness", a worrying amount of the music is a little trying It takes a pretty sombre bunch of guys to make a calypso sound dull, but Gateway manage it with "Calypso Falto" Call me wet, but as I sat mesmensed by all this expertise a little voice kept begging for at least one memorable tune, one decent stretch of raunch, indeed anything remotely resembling passion I don't expect hit singles — but when Metheny or Scofield use such devices and words like 'saccharine' and 'sell out' are bandied around, maybe they realise that listeners might occasionally want their hearts engaging along with their minds

PAUL STUMP

Groovy
Groovy: The Rebirth Of Retro-Cool
EXTREME XCO 033 CD

More rumblings from Chicago's avant underbelly Groovy is Gastr Del Sol's Dan Burke wrestling with the logic and sound of 70s and 80s funk cliches Like Miles Davis playing Scritti Politti, *Groovy* is a combination of shameless hucksterism, po-faced homage and witty experimentation At times, the project is reminiscent of Negativland's *The Perfect Cut* there is a profound mistrust present, but with that goes a morbid fascination — Burke doesn't want to look, but he has to Like Negativland, only less sophomoric, Burke contaminates the funk with arhythmic, Ambient synth-washes and discordant found sounds. It's both an attempt to undercut funk's booty-shaking catalysis and an exploration of the out-there possibilities of a bouncing bassline and chicken scratch guitar

Groovy is preoccupied with funk's

drone for all the *Shaft* samples, Miles trumpet fills and Prince keyboard riffs, there's no orgiastic release — the wah-wah and bump just go on and on. You could dance or nod your head b-boy style to this record, but you won't. *Groovy* turns funk into listening music.

Chic achieved something similar with disco, but it was more successful because of its embrace of the genre's pleasure principle. Chic teased and mocked disco on its own terms — they exploited the contradictions already present in the music. *Groovy* remakes funk in its own image (a cerebral, self-conscious experiment in the contours of sound) in order to tinker with its generic limits. It sounds great, but, as Dr Funkenstein might say, I want my funk uncut.

PETER SHAPIRO

Jonathan Harvey
Jonathan Harvey 1: String Quartets, Lotuses, Scena
MONTAIGNE MO782034 CD

One of the uncanny aspects of music is the way it embodies social truths quite without reference to the aims of its producers. Jonathan Harvey's muse is "ethical and spiritual", he doesn't have a social or political programme, yet his music perfectly expresses the pathos and isolation of the academic intelligentsia. Sounds are clear, linear and usually high in pitch. Where dub and rap and rock insist on low sounds, a musical version of the regular thump of manual labour, Harvey's constructions have the frailty of 'pure' thought. Harvey does not set out to occupy the elite high-ground of the musical scale, yet he ends up there. Strange.

Harvey's idea of the spiritual is very different from the much publicised 'faith' of the neo-medieval pops. The Arditti String Quartet are utterly at home with his sparse, modernist lines and lead them into his strange, glinting evaporations with conviction. The Nieuw Ensemble from Amsterdam — who have played programmes devoted to Boulez, Ferneyhough and Nono in the past — give Harvey's scores just the right steely tension. It's as if mayflies were being sculpted in glass.

Harvey reaches his ambiguous 'spiritual' moments with commendable clarity. Compared to the big-sell trendies, those who use postmodernism as a justification for recycling old music (Nyman, Bryars, Adams), Harvey has both integrity and charm. However, one senses something inescapably minor about his work, as if he is portraying the 'spiritual' from a position of comfort and control, rather than testing the limits of musical existence. This was dramatically brought home at the Huddersfield Festival last year, when Frances-Marie Uitti played pieces by both Harvey and Richard Barrett. The younger composer challenges himself, the instrument, the player and audience comprehension in an intense dialectic that makes process more important than a 'fine composition'. The music on this disc is very beautiful, but maybe a little too achieved, a little too safe, to really matter.

BEN WATSON

Hugh Hopper/Mark Hewins
Adreamor
IMPETUS IMP CD 19423 CD

Hugh Hopper/ Caveman Shoestore
Caveman Hughscore
TIM KERR TK95CD093 CD

Since 1980, Hugh Hopper has often collaborated in the duo format — with the late Alan Gowen, Kramer and guitarist Mark Hewins. The latter twosome is also the basis for a trio, Mashu, with percussionist Shayamal Maitra. Hewins has played with (seemingly) everyone from Trevor Watts to The Detroit Spinners as well as with Hopper in Soft Heap. *Adreamor* consists of improvised pieces, including two lengthy work-outs recorded live at the Vortex, London.

The mood is thoughtful and poised, with Hopper's bass planting melodic, rhythmic blocks in Hewins's echoing MIDI guitar structures. A convincing argument against those who feel that such elements should be absent from 'free' music. "Lizard One", for example, finds Hopper playing a three note ostinato line that proceeds from harmonium-like sub-bass to monster fuzz, while Hewins spreads distorted notes over the top.

It's easy to get drawn into the record's depth, especially on "Vortex One" which unfolds over 14 minutes from a nebulous beginning of half-chordings and abstract string scrapings on bass, to the coalescing of voices that hints at jazz/blues before fading out. It's similar in its light feel, though very different in technique, to Hans Reichel's *Bonobo Beach* album. There's an intuitive strength to the playing on this album, an alchemical potency.

Caveman Hughscore finds Hopper making a guest appearance with US neo-Prog chamber-rock group Caveman Shoestore. Though not as satisfying and empathetic a set as *Adreamor*, the record houses some unusual shapes within its boundaries. Singer and accordion player Elaine DiFalco tackles her tangential tunes with soul, but second vocalist and drummer Henry Franzoni's spoken aphorisms are far less satisfying. Some of the songs err towards over-complication. "Scooter Trash", for example.

Hopper's functions as one third of a three-handed rhythm section with Fred Chalenor and Franzoni. Considering the ammunition available, the rhythms are busy, but actually quite muted — until Hopper steps on the fuzz pedal and cranks it up, or when Jen Harrison doubles up on some lines with French horn. Though essentially rock based, the rhythms are kept buoyant by Franzoni who forsakes flash for a constant, rolling jazz-accented style. A cover of Hopper's Soft Machine song "Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening" completes this collaboration betwen acolytes and mentor.

MIKE BARNES

Ken Ishii
Jelly Tones
R&S 95065 CD/2LP

Flare
Reference To Difference
SUBLIME SBL5006 CD

Japanese Electronica-phile Ken Ishii specialises in glacial takes on the Techno tradition. Unlike the recent output of Mouse On Mars or Patrick Pulsinger, who have rewired Techno's icy, mechanical abstractions into compositions radiating with warmth, Ishii's past releases have been as chilling as an angry glance from James Mason.

Ishii's Flare CD, released on the Japanese label Sublime and containing old and new material, continues in this vein. This is Techno without the funk, mechanics without the bodily referent. All of the calling cards of Detroit's

second wave and their progeny (Underground Resistance, Carl Craig, Eddie 'Flashin' Fowlkes, Kenny Larkin, Steve Rachmad) are here: digital precision, plangent synth-washes and percussion that expands and diffuses as soon as it's triggered. But Ishii presents them without the liquid grooves or the metallic, ozone-warmth of his mentors. The cold cruelty of *Reference To Difference* is an almost deadpan reading of a musical tradition — like Siouxsie Sioux singing "Dear Prudence".

Jelly Tones, Ishii's new release on R&S, is distinctly richer and warmer. Several of the tracks are aimed at the dancefloor and feature more organic sounds, like the gamelan percussion on "Moved By Air". *Jelly Tones* isn't exactly a hands-in-the-air marathon, though (despite a track like "Extra", with its rousing breakbeat and a keyboard riff reminiscent of Jaydee's floor-burner "Plastic Dreams"). The fragmented, distorted and striated rhythms of "Frame Out" and "Ethos 9", and the stark 909 beats of "Stretch" reveal Ishii's signature brittleness, while "Pause In Herbs" and "Endless Season" stake out his usual bleak terrain. It's the perfect accompaniment to that bone-chilling wind from the North Sea which sweeps across the country at this time of year.

PETER SHAPIRO

Giya Kancheli
Exil
ECM NEW SERIES 1535 CD

Although this recording marks a new song cycle for Kancheli, the theme of exile is nothing new in his work. ECM's previous Kancheli release, *Abii Ne Viderem*, was a prayer cycle whose spaciousness spoke not only of loss, but also of hope. A Georgian composer whose early works, like those of Part and Górecki, often reflect the rigorous experimentalism of the old Eastern order, Kancheli has lived in the West for some years. Like those other composers, Kancheli has turned to diverse sources in his quest for a music that reflects a transcendent spirituality. Liturgical and folk motifs appear alongside techniques which shift between tonality and the atonal. To describe him solely as a holy minimalist is to dismiss the true vein of originality that characterises his work.

Beautifully recorded (and, of course, beautifully packaged), *Exil* is more explicit about its theme. The settings of Psalm 23, three poems by Paul Celan and, finally, the title piece from Hans Sahl, are stark, uncompromising affairs, the sparse music — largely slow mediations between tonalities, with flurries of activity — accentuating a sense of displacement. The pervading atmosphere is bright, eerie and frosty, and soprano Maacha Deubner, with flute and small string ensemble, has a fine instinct for the nuance that this music requires in order to live.

Although Kancheli's texts are pretty disparate, *Exil* nevertheless functions well as a cycle. Themes and textures seem to slide effortlessly between psalm and poems. One wonders whether the descent into the lower reaches of the cello's register for Psalm 23 signals compassion. Perhaps it does, although Kancheli's vision is dark, and, while infinitely far-sighted, rests on factors less immediate than the 'cynical' heart-tugging that infects the work of other composers.

LOUISE GRAY

Intakt: Postfach 468, CH 8024, Zurich, Switzerland

Justice League: through Jetstar, SRD

Language: through Vital

Leo: through Cadillac, Impetus, These

Maya: through Cadillac

Mille Plateaux: through SRD

Montaigne: through Harmonia Mundi

Moving Shadow: through SRD

Nova Zembla: through Plastic Head

One Way: through Greyhound

Kenny Process Team
Surfin' With...
HEMIOLA 009 LP

The main musical influence on Kenny Process Team is *Trout Mask/Decals*-era Beefheart — their debut album is a lively expansion of those all too rare instrumentals Don Van Vliet penned for Jeff Cotton and Bill Harkleroad. There's some attention paid to tone — this vinyl-only release sounds as if it's been recorded on old valve equipment — which lends the pieces a timeless warmth, deliberately removed from the concerns of diverse contemporary scenes. Electric guitar, drums and bass are entwined like three bodies as much as minds. This is physical music, with an unironic folk element, at once pitched at the present and quaintly charming. Now and then, things get a little tied in knots of superfluity, but the tendency throughout is towards the essential, with some elegant and assured acoustic guitar solos by Kevin Plummer harking back to the otherworldly domestic blues of Mississippi John Hurt, and evoking in deceptively casual sketches remote landscapes — the lush clearings set aside for cryptic jigs and waltzes.

Live, the group perform sporadically with performance artist Ronald Fraser Munro, whose loopy monologues add a confrontational edge to the trio's twisting interplay. Here, concentrated instrumentals — now poignant and reflective, now boppy and bodzy — delineate a collective no-man's land between edgy resignation and alienated contentment. Through the haze, one clearly recognises Britain as it is in the 1990s.

ED BAXTER

Merzbow
Noizhead
BLAST FIRST BFFP125 CD

Blue Humans
Live In London 1994
BLAST FIRST BFFP108 CD

Earth
Sunn Amps And Smashed Guitars Live!
BLAST FIRST BFFP123 CD

Three releases all recorded live at Blast First's Disobey club earlier this year.

Volume is a strange phenomenon. Live, Merzbow immerse you in swathes of sound — a cross between 100 pneumatic drills and the complex shifting textures of late Coltrane saxophone. In Disobey's cramped space, I swore I began to hear little dancing melodies in the feedback squeaks, plastic Hong Kong pop beats in the machine-room throbs. But, rather like drinking or smoking, you emerge wondering if what you experienced was really there. Now here is that same performance on disc, compacted to living room size. The pop element is still there to my ears, but it probably sounds like a monochrome roar to most people.

The headlong *attack* of Merzbow saves them from dilettante Industrial-lite (too much of this around at the moment), they're very aware of what sound you've already had, and what comes next. It's as if Merzbow took the propaganda for Einsturzende Neubauten seriously, and didn't in fact form a teen rock goup with a bit of feedback. *Noizhead* makes you realise how vast sheer sound can be: it's the sort of thing art-installations try and do — just look at all this *material* — but rarely pull off. Gruelling, agonizing, ugly — and weirdly exhilarating.

Improvised gutter guitar keeps on coming. The Blue Humans are magical,

a kind of horizontal, open-plains answer to Ascension's punky ziggurats Longtime associate of leader Rudolph Grey, drummer Tom Surgal is joined by busking free jazz saxophonist Charles Gayle, here playing drums too They set up a warm, messy percussion barrage over and into which Grey's unique guitar dives with grace and aplomb The muddy production seems entirely right, an abraded surface for careful meditations on note and timbre Grey is capable of the gobsmacking, as-if-time-went-backwards musical thoughts that characterise great improvisors from Charlie Parker to Derek Bailey Sometimes he seems to scrunch all the music into an old crisp packet, then, like a conjuror, opens it out into myriad multicoloured silk handkerchiefs.

Earth's disc has just one track, "Ripped On Fascist Ideas" It's interesting to speculate on why Disobey artists favour such grim titles and images Caspar Brotzmann puts tanks on his covers, Merzbow's disc is all gothic script and chastity belts Perhaps the only way to tickle the jaded appetites of high-brow consumers is to reference their nightmares

Earth's music is a useful illustration of why all feedback-drone excess is not art. they've got the hair and the Marshalls stacks and the feet-apart poses, but predictable rock chords peep through the painfully unshaped feedback whines — a Motorhead soundcheck that never ends I suppose, being a rock label, Blast First must be allowed its lapses into image-before-music mediocrity When will a Disobey audience be goaded into a righteous riot, or do we put up with anything in the name of art?

BEN WATSON

The Mighty Upsetter
Kung Fu Meets The Dragon
JUSTICE LEAGUE JLCD 5DDD CD/LP

Little Roy
Tafari Earth Uprising
PRESSURE SOUNDS PS 006 CD

Tappa Zukie
In Dub
BLOOD & FIRE BAFCDOOB CD

Here come more 70s JA reggae reissues In a sense these sounds are happening here now for the first time — the original issue of the Zukie dub set, for example, was limited to only 300 copies, and the Scratch and Little Roy recordings were never widely available Reggae is deeply embedded in British musical consciousness and a seemingly inexhaustible treasure chest of ideas As for the recent flood of reissues, one is reminded of successive repackagings of blues recordings How far will the Blood & Fire effort push reggae into the public eye? What price Lee Perry larking about in ads for Lee denims in 2D years' time as reggae achieves unassailable status as a symbol of authenticity and containable rebellion? Does *anyone* dislike dub?

Perry's in fine form on *Kung Fu Meets The Dragon*, recorded at Black Ark "circa 1975" It captures the funky Upsetters sound of the early 70s near the end of its ineluctable trajectory towards the fully achieved disorientation of masterworks like *Super Ape* Augustus Pablo weighs in with harmolodica and a nutty Kung Fu theme adds conceptual colour Besides his activities at the desk, Scratch shows that words and singing need only be incidental to the vocaliser's art, clearing his throat all the way through one track and hiccupping through another The purchaser can choose between bright green vinyl or a CD with five corking extra tracks The only sensible option is to buy both

The Black Ark studio played host to the recording of "Prophesy", one of the best tracks on Pressure Sounds' Little Roy compilation The album brings together a number of singles recorded by Roy in the mid-70s Little Roy is little known, but his career goes back to a 1965 single for Studio One, which he recorded when he was only 13 He had a Jamaican number one with "Bongo Nyah" in 1969 and recorded successfully for the Matador label into the early 70s Subsequently he's surfaced from time to time (the popularity of the "Prophesy" rhythm in the early 90s saw a revival of interest), but the incompatibility between his rasta beliefs and the world of the recording industry has drastically limited his commercial activities *Tafari Earth Uprising* is a great showcase for his powerful, smoky voice and unusual way of phrasing a vocal line Uncluttered and spiritually intense, there is compelling purity of vision in the best work here Although all the tracks don't hit home in the same way, material like "Tribal War" (covered recently by Little Axe) is essential listening

Tappa Zukie is perhaps best known as the voice behind the hits "MPLA" and "She Want A Phensic" *In Dub*, released in 1976 and mixed by Phillip Smart, was Zukie's first dub album as producer It's a set of treatments of crunching Sly & Robbie rhythms, most of which will be familiar to anyone with a passing interest in reggae Massive, enigmatic and ghostly, these cuts are beautiful examples of the sound of the era Though so few copies were made, it's has an epochal feel to it. Tracks like "Rush I Some Dub" show Zukie in command of an imposingly weighty sound Elegantly packaged and annotated as ever

WILL MONTGOMERY

Moondog Jr
Everyday I Wear A Greasy Black Feather On My Hat
ISLAND 804D CD

As their name suggests, Moondog Jr explore a distinctive strain of music — part blues- and jazz-derived, but with Country and folk stylings, all streamlined through an offbeat, shambolic delivery that strongly recalls both Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart.

Moondog Jr have *Rain Dogs*-era Waits down to a T, complete with rickety jazz-infused instrumentals ("Love 609") and cracked ballads ("Jintro & The Great Luna") They can also swing in an earthy kind of way — "Moondance" fuses their husky Waits-isms with a fuzzy Latino-funk rhythm — and indulge themselves in gratuitously weird lo-fi instrumentals "TV Song" has a sway-along accordion and a kind of arch self-pitying whine to its vocals that oddly recalls Dr Hook, an unexpected addition to the more obvious influences at work here

There are times when the group, fronted by bass player, guitarist and sometime vocalist with dEUS, Stef Kamil Carlens, appears to be trying too hard to achieve a loopy otherworldliness The semi-narrated songs work least well, spotlighting an uneasy degree of contrivance But as a slice of adopted underside Americana, much of the album sounds fine Carlen's vocals are suitably expressive, particularly when he stretches out beyond a formulaic Beefheart/Waits growl, as on the gospel-flavoured "Shall I Let This Good Man In"

TOM RIDGE

John Oswald
Grayfolded
SWELL/ARTIFACT 1969-1996 2CD

The Grateful Dead
Dick's Picks Volume Two
GRATEFUL DEAD GDCD 4020 CD

The Grateful Dead
Europe 72
WARNER BROTHERS 7599 27265 2CD

Time has lost all sense in the age of digital reproduction Digitally transferred to heaven — a hole in deepest Cyberspace — the past, the future, the living and the Grateful Dead exist in an endless present, where all that has been and ever will be is there for the taking by those who've got some use for it. "Nothing is new, everything is renewed" is maybe the maxim around which improvisors like The Dead — more exemplary jammers than outright freebasers — and a reformed sampler pirate-come-compositor like John Oswald can talk.

Offered access to The Dead vaults by bassist/contemporary music patron Phil Lesh with a view to him plunderphucking something from their archives, Oswald plumped on the notion of recreating a meta-"Dark Star" from thousands of samples and edits from 25 years of live recordings of the song through which The Dead, on a good night, could, trance-like, freeze time If the idea of legitimised piracy takes the thrill out of Oswald for those who only get the hots for him as a copyright transgressor, well, they're doing the man a grave disservice For this project, spread across two CDs and beautifully packaged with a booklet of interviews with Jerry Garcia, Lesh and lyricist Robert Hunter, plus two sound maps, is a ravishing resolution of the age-old dialectical argument between improvised and composed music. Ironically, it's one hit on by The Dead themselves as long ago as their *Anthem Of The Sun* album, when they similarly studio-processed multiples of superimposed live recordings, in order to conquer their studio fear But Oswald's got the technology and speed of studio-mind to bring the idea of montaging improvised sound clusters

inside a compositional framework to a truly thrilling conclusion

The choice of "Dark Star" for his extraordinary archaeology of space and memory is apt, and his achievement is in no way diminished by its obviousness The song began life as a little pinprick of a jug-pop 45 in late 67 By the time of the *Live/Dead* recording of 1969, it had already expanded into a massive pulsating black hole in the middle of The Dead's set. The version aired on the 1971 Columbus Ohio recording from the exuberant official bootleg *Dick's Picks Volume Two* is more cosmic breeze than acid mindmash Both moods are naturally evident at various points in Oswald's *Grayfolded* But there's so much more

The first volume, *Transitive Axis*, released as a single album in 1994 (infuriatingly, the second CD, *Mirror Ashes*, is only available as part of this new double pack), leans towards the light, and its bright intensities are achieved through Oswald's method of layering any number of performances, treating them, speeding them up or folding them into each other, sometimes focusing on a particular instrument to create, for example, the occasional frenzied beeswarm Garcia solo *Mirror Ashes*, partially constructed in response to Lesh's criticism of the first not being experimental enough, travels deeper into the cold reaches of the song. This far inside, its density threatens to pull it apart. Indeed, parts are so dense, to hear them is like being trepanned with a jackhammer It's stunning in every sense, and a wonderful vindication of Lesh's faith in the project and in New Music as a whole

After accepting Oswald as spirit-guide, it's not so easy to come in from the dark. The aforementioned *Dick's Picks* from 1971 is a perfect halfway house between the sonic pioneering Dead and the great American songsters they were soon to become They would draw on the American canon of folk, blues, Country and rock to evoke the vastness of a continent. The (overpriced) reissue of the double CD *Europe 72* catches them in a state of transition from full blown acid phreakers to the more song-based group, albeit one with in-built improvisational exits At this stage, they hadn't quite got round their lack of a real vocalist, but their covers of "You Win Again", "Hurts Me Too" and "Morning Dew" are still profoundly affecting, and the awesome thunder of "Truckin'" picks up sufficient momentum for The Dead to take off for deep space It's heaven up here and I'm not coming down for anyone

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Rastascan: PO Box 3073, San Leandro, CA 94578-3073, USA

Red Note: through These

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Evan Parker/Barry Guy/Paul Lytton
Breaths And Heartbeats
RASTASCAN RECORDS BRD D19 CD

Evan Parker/Barry Guy
Obliquities
MAYA MCD9501 CD

Breaths And Heartbeats differs from the usual recordings of this trio in that separate performances are not presented in the order in which they were played in the studio, and some editing has gone on It is doubtful whether these modest adjustments — tembly, tembly significant to some, of course — would have been noticeable had we not been alerted to them by the sleeve note But Evan Parker owns up to the imposition of a symmetrical arrangement of the pieces (track seven mirrors track six, track eight mirrors track five, and so on) This offers endless reprogramming possibilities for the perspicacious, and an otherwise satisfactory structure But rapidity and surprise is so central to what this group does that hearing the pieces out of recorded sequence makes for no great dislocation

The trio is like a gleaming but enigmatic machine built by aliens Why does it go so fast? How do the bits relate to each other? Questions that are hard to answer where this intensely charged music, which engages the brain in such a peculiar way, is concerned What's beyond doubt is its power (though the trio's recorded output doesn't quite duplicate the juddering intensity of the live experience) Some will carp, saying that this album in broad terms (bar the editing) so closely resembles past outings that it's verging on the predictable, others, from closer in, will find entirely new adventures in the music.

Silver Machine Mark Two comes in the shape of the Parker/Guy duo album, which was recorded on the same day as the above Though they didn't make a duo album (*Incision*) until as late as 1981, Parker and Guy first played together 14 years earlier in John Stevens's SME 28 years after that event, the remarkable understanding they developed over the 80s in the trio is at awesome levels Glancing, abrupt and elliptical, *Obliquities* certainly lives up to its title The concentration is phenomenal and there's not a slack moment among the album's 75 minutes of testing, exhilarating, state-of-the-art improvisation

WILL MONTGOMERY

Passengers
Original Soundtrack I
ISLAND CID 8045 CD

This 'Volume One' business always revives the dread spectre of ELP's *Works* You mean to say there's *more* of this on the way? It's interesting that nobody's yet dared compare the expanding conceits of Planet U2 with the worst excesses of Prog But fair's fair, *Passengers*, the group's sister project to the summer's *Child For Bosnia* collaboration with Eno and others, is a welcome retreat from their normal waterfront bellicosity and simpleton attempts at 'high art' That's possibly because most of this collection of soundtrack excerpts is actually written and arranged by Eno himself, but anyway

There's a kind of quaintness abroad when Eno revisits the pop song, *Another Green World* and Roxy Music magically reappear together Some of the tracks here yearn, for example, for the seductive massage of a Ferry, Bowie or a Sylvian, but have to put up with being roughly mauled by the idiot Bono Still, interesting things are done in a kind of offbeat Kraftwerk-for-the-90s way, the opening "United Colours" being a particularly listenable example

Eno's multidimensional tampering with space and timbre within and without the music provides The Edge with a backdrop for soloing of a type unknown in U2 The plasticity of recorded sound is Eno's meat and drink, and his trickery here (each beat of "Slug" for instance, balloons off into its own little sound world) is a neat counterpoint to the goofy machismo of U2's rank textures. By the way, the trumpeted Pavarotti collaboration, puffed prominently on the cover, amounts to no more than an unremarkable (and possibly sampled) tenor warble on the now oft-heard "Miss Sarajevo" Howie B's quirky contribution to "Elvis Ate America"

is perhaps preferable.

Like all art-rockers, U2 can't help but pretend to be something they manifestly aren't. But I suppose that playing the game is what counts rather than winning, and if experiments like these broaden the mind of those knocked out by *Rattle And Hum* (which surely couldn't be difficult), then *Passengers* deserves some credit and will have paid its way not just financially but morally, too

PAUL STUMP

Jorge Reyes
Mort Aux Vaches
STAALPLAAT NO NUMBER CD

Rapoon
The Kirghiz Light
STAALPLAAT ST CD 097 2 CD

Death To Cows? Whatever the significance behind the intriguing title of the profligate Jorge Reyes's new live CD, the record itself is a life-affirming experience. There'll be few surprises in store for the growing number of initiates into Reyes's sepulchral ethnic strangeness, and treats aplenty for the novice. Reyes's obsession with the spirit world, and the voice of those spirits as the only tangible manifestations of the afterlife, must surely explain the centrality of the voice in his work. And what a voice, leading and shaping the orchestrating colours of electronics and percussion rather than simply prettifying them, it permeates all the pieces with a timbre as awesome as all of Reyes's multiplicity of discreet loops and samples. The opening of the second track "Flight" is one of the most numbingly melancholy sounds you'll ever hear, from man, beast or machine.

Rapoon (Robin Storey) can't claim the same exotic authenticity or fancy antecedents as Reyes (a Mexican who riffs on AmerIndian folklore), but hailing from Gateshead that's hardly surprising, which makes his mammoth *The Kirghiz Light* project all the more laudable. A self-confessed devotee of mantric and shamanistic music (see *The Wire* 133), it would be easy to dismiss him on hearing his work as a sackcloth holy minimalist churning out drones in his (and our) sleep. But much of *The Kirghiz Light* would stand comparison with grander and more ambitious crossover music — like that of, say, Popol Vuh, notably with the tumbling tablas of "Feathered Skies". Storey's thing is to establish a resonating tone which sounds through the whole piece, used to particularly telling effect on "Evacuate".

The problem with most Fourth World music is its classically Orientalist desire to conjure the fabulous, while the everyday reality of many native cultures is often as mundane as ours or is severely ascetic and lived out in harsh environments. *The Kirghiz Light* dares to evoke a culture whose nobility and fascination reside in (and whose music evolves out of) arduous struggle and stony faith in an unforgiving land. To that end, this album's austerity is essential, touching and eminently worth hearing.

PAUL STUMP

Scanner
Sulphur
SUB ROSA VISTA 2 SR95 CD

Dirk Van Dooren, the artist, collects rejected photo-booth pictures, which he turns into art, a vast grey collage of forgotten images. Robin Rimbaud, the Scanner, does the same with the human voice. He collects similarly unlovely recordings of mobile phone conversations with a hand-held receiver and embeds them in a backing track of drum loops and drones — some of them surprisingly catchy. *Sulphur*'s stolen moments of chat give the project its edge — a bad-tempered urban edge. You hear self-righteous bickering and desultory conversations about flats and shooting incidents and mealtime arrangements, mostly spoken with the loose vowels and glottal stops of estuary English (you have to head north these days to find decent consonants). Someone who didn't speak English might hear this as pure electroacoustic expression, but those of us living within scanning distance of London's Purcell Room (where this was recorded in March) may reject or delight in this for its familiarity.

Working live, Rimbaud is denied the chance to select and edit these snippets of speech — what you hear is what he picked up on the night, and the random, live immediacy of *Sulphur* would seem to make it a bad bet for repeated listening. Yet there are musical details to be savoured — analogue squiggles of sound repeated skilfully on "Radio Entry", a familiar drum loop coming in at just the right time on "Flaneur Electronique". The conversation that ends "Brittle" — and the whole album — intensifies the listener's feeling of guilty voyeurism (auyeurism?): two women discuss medical history and a forthcoming ultrasound scan — did he really just pick this up on the night? *[Yes — Ed]* And when Rimbaud becomes as big as Jean-Michel Jarre (whose *Zoolook* this resembles in places) how will the scanned participants feel? Most people hate hearing their voices on answering machines, let alone projected over a sound system.

Neal Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash* conjectured a type of information scavenger called a 'gargoyle', who wandered at large, collecting audio and video information on strapped-on tape recorders and searching in dustbins and skips for printouts and disks. Gargoyles are despised by ordinary people until their information proves valuable, but Rimbaud should have an easier time — his sounds are too seductive. He appears to mean well, writing about "a way to encourage interaction and a return to real communication". Hmm. I prefer the puff from the record company: "It is an intense moment of emotion, this machine captured by random all the sadness of the world."

JOHN L WALTERS

Michael Shrieve
Two Doors
CMP CMPCD 74 CD

Whether it was Michael Shrieve or his record company that decided to bolt together two utterly different albums, it's a mistake. *Two Doors* is essentially a new set by a new trio: fusion drummer Shrieve, bassist Jonas Hellborg and guitarist Shawn Lane. With it we get a second CD of outtakes from the sessions that produced *Fascination*, Shrieve's 1994 CMP debut with Bill Frisell and Wayne Horvitz. The mistake is simple: the *Fascination* outtakes not only outshine the new set, but ironically they considerably improve on *Fascination* itself.

"Michael's recording credits read like a 'Who's Who' of popular music," apparently, the first half of *Two Doors* is unfortunately pretty much what you'd expect of a musician whose press release makes that kind of claim. Shrieve *is* a fantastic drummer, but his tendency to grandstand is at its most gross in this company. When John McLaughlin ill-advisedly reconvened The Mahavishnu Orchestra in 1985, Hellborg seemed the group's saving grace. Sure, he was dripping with chops and bad taste, but he had some kind of energy. Ten years on, the chops have taken over.

The fact that Hellborg recruited Shawn Lane to this group is instructive, the guitarist is one tasteless virtuoso, all blustering guitar-school fusion lines and pointless sub-Allan Holdsworth comping. He *does* have something reasonably unique: singing in unison with his guitar lines (a technique Shrieve risibly compares to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan). But, really, do we need a fuzak George Benson? Jazz rock as trade-fair display stand fodder: unforgivable.

Meanwhile, for all its throwaway nature, the second set really works. With the exception of the long, Floydesque jam "Queen Bee", these pieces are tiny discarded fragments, the perfect environment for Horvitz and Frisell, both masters of the miniature. Here, in the barest circumstances, they work wonders with the splashes of sleazy jazz *noir*, spiralling, psychedelic guitar solos and uneasy organ drones. Superb: an album in its own right. Or should have been.

SIMON HOPKINS

Soft Machine
Live In France
ONE WAY RECORDS OW31445 2CO

Soft Machine
Live At The Paradiso 1969
VOICEPRINT VP193 CD

If it weren't for Soft Machine I'd have lost my virginity five years earlier. Carrying Softs albums around was an arm's length away from not using deodorant in terms of desirability, and when word got round that I took a date to see three bespectacled geeks and the reptilean Mike Ratledge (at about the same time as *Live In France*, circa 1972) it just about did it for sex. But I'm not one for holding grudges, and hearing this stuff now is a reminder of the thrill then attached to odd time signatures, extended composition and the bizarre transsaxual exchanges going on between Ratledge's fuzzed-up organ and Elton Dean's pipsqueak saxello and alto. What seemed intriguingly difficult then now resolves itself into pleasingly

symmetrical compositions founded on monolithic sunken bass parts such as the one that marks out "Slightly All The Time" Despite John Marshall's rockslide drumming, which gave this version of Soft Machine their awesome, irresistible momentum, the seed of their future sterility — forgive the twisted metaphor — is already evident. It was most likely planted by Ratledge himself, who at least had the grace to retire when it became obvious the increasingly arid soundscapes his electric piano plotted would bear no more fruit.

The earlier Soft Machine, here bootlegged in Amsterdam in 1969 before their jazz rock fusion separated the boys from the girls, is almost another group entirely At this point they were a trio, with bassist Hugh Hopper brought in to replace Kevin Ayers after an exhausting US tour supporting Jimi Hendrix, and Robert Wyatt was still their drummer-vocalist. They hadn't yet entirely uprooted themselves from the British psychedelic scene, and though they were beginning to lean more towards the jazz abstractions that were psychedelia's older and more ascetic cousin, they were as loud a mindfuck as, say, a severely bombed-out MCS especially when Hopper and Ratledge locked fuzztones and rutted until a song collapsed exhausted Strange how 'fuzz' denoted both 'cop' and the noise that most closely resembled the kind of thing you got busted for back then, but that's fuzz logic for you and those were funny times

BIBA KOPF

John Stevens/Kent Carter/Derek Bailey
One Time
INCUS 22 CD

Iskra 1903
Iskra 1903
MAYA 9502 CD

Call it what you will, British-style 'free improvisation' or 'spontaneous composition' developed through the personalities of its practitioners As these musicians created individual techniques and then translated those instrumental attitudes into musical form, the fragile balance of interplay and cohesion that distinguishes it from its more aggressive American counterpart relied heavily upon interpersonal dynamics to determine the sound's shape and direction It's surprising that two of those who helped invent the style back in the mid-60s have played together so infrequently since that time, but in fact this 1992 date is the only trio recording of Derek Bailey and the late John Stevens And what can be heard amid the prodding and poking of tonality, the shattered and reconstructed melodies, is a simple but hard-won trust in one's companions

The experience of these players is such that no one 'takes over' at any given time, but neither is there a continuous ensemble orthodoxy All three — guitar, drums and bassist Kent Carter — become percussive agents, though they agree on a muted, delicate deliberation The calm (which is not to say slow or passive) music displays a lucid rationale, rhythmic assurance and room to breathe At this level of expertise there is the threat of complacency, but the intensity is palpable These are three masters plying their craft.

Bailey was previously a member of the important early 70s co-op Iskra 1903 (or 'spark', named after Lenin's British house journal) Newly recorded (1992) with violinist Phil Wachsmann replacing Bailey, the trio now exhibits more fluidity and a larger frame of reference Animated by bassist Barry Guy's energy, they persist in quick-witted ripostes and remarks on the fly; there are even times when the most enigmatic of statements seem to blossom into a theme — something that was anathema to the earlier group Guy and Wachsmann work well together, and trombonist Paul Rutherford can be both brash and laconic in the same breath. Though Bailey and cohorts have sometimes been characterised as creating 'insect music', there's plenty of flesh and blood here, along with a reassertion of power and concord

ART LANGE

Yma Sumac
Live In Concert 1961
EJECT CD 2116 CD

The Bad Examples
Slow Music
ATATAK WR 65 CD

Picture this scene from Billy Wilder's 1961 Cold War satire *One, Two, Three* In a once-grand East Berlin hotel, Soviet stooges lock horns with Coca-Cola executive James Cagney, while in the corner a superannuated string ensemble plays "We Have No Bananas" and "Sabre Dance" like Elvis never happened *Ees funny, no?* Well yes, actually Listening to Yma Sumac recorded live in the Soviet Union the same year demands a leap of the imagination in the other direction, if you're to negotiate the pratfalls of camp cultdom her recent rediscovery by Creation is likely to consign her to Because, despite the combined curiosity value of her Inca legend, an exuberant multi-octave voice and the spirited folklore or stiff-necked samba orchestral arrangements, Yma Sumac's records mostly aren't that good Not crap, like that other hero of exotica Martin Denny, but not enthralling either

Perhaps her legend was already tarnishing in the USA when she undertook this extensive 1961 USSR tour, which thrilled — it says here — 80 million Soviet citizens. There are moments when she appears quite overwhelmed by it all, as indeed any performer of limited cult appeal at home would be when being eaten up alive by such a massive sensation-hungry audience But whatever the reason, Sumac and her orchestra live come together far better than on her (perhaps poorly transferred) reissues. And no, 80 million Soviet citizens can't be wrong

Whereas Sumac and Martin Denny's popularity coincided with the rise of mass tourism, it's increasingly difficult now for musicians and audiences alike to satisfy their desire for something from elsewhere — something exotic, something genuinely unknown What's the true value of a shrunken head in a world shrunk by mass communication? Distance in space has been replaced by the ironic distancing of a knowing nod which brings audience and performer together with a conspiratorial smirk. When the world and minds have grown this small, you might just as well stay at home The deliberately seedy Bad Examples, from Dusseldorf, probably set out to see the world, but they sound like their money ran out at the local kebab joint, where they've been stuck ever since playing cheesy central European and Balkanite gypsy tunes on piano, violin and bass Their enervating amber-lit lounge music stills the anxieties of all the other barflies who get stuck there sopping up the slops For sure this stuff's small beer, but it chimes well with the times David Lynch would love them

BIBA KOPF

Tibor Szemzö
Tractatus
LEO CDLR 227 CD

Electroacoustic music you can love and cherish — a half-hour piece inspired by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Originally composed to accompany a video work, this version, which includes fragments of text spoken in seven different languages, was assembled over several months The idea is simple, consisting of a man humming the same brief melody repeatedly to a discreet but continually shifting accompaniment. Bits of Wittgenstein are spoken over this Sometimes the translations appear to be literal, sometimes sections are only available in one language An elastic pulse accommodates the casual nature of the humming and the bass notes are placed at disconcerting intervals The embellishments give the piece a scarcely perceptible sense of evolution but the main impression is one of stillness There's an impassive feel to the hummed part that provides a light, unconcerned backdrop for the gnomic, out-of-place snatches of Wittgenstein It's a good game

Reference points? Hard to think of any at all, though the humming reminded me of an Istvan Marta piece using recordings of folk laments, and the whole brought to mind Laune Anderson's "O Superman", but essentially it's out on its own (and irresistible)

WILL MONTGOMERY

Richard Teitelbaum
Cyberband
MOERS MUSIC 02000 CD

Richard Teitelbaum
Golem
TZADIK 7105 CD

A remarkable electronic musician, deft at real-time improvisation on synthesizers and computer-assisted hookups, Teitelbaum made his mark with the 60s free-music-meets-socialist-populism of Musica Elettronica Vica, followed by collaborations with Anthony Braxton,

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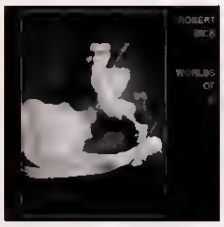


CD LR 224 ROBERT DICK: *WORLDS OF IF*

Solo CD by the composer, performer and improvisor who has revolutionized the soundworld of his instrument. His eight pieces are titled after science fiction works which inspired him to write the music. Robert Dick: "The sense that anything - truly anything - can happen is what I treasure above all in science fiction and I try to have that sense permeate my music."

CD LR 225 MICHAEL JEFRY STEVENS / MARK FELDMAN: *HAIKU*

This duo collaboration of two brightest talents of the New York scene is an outgrowth of their musical association for the past 8 years. Ten compositions on the CD explore both improvised and composed dialogue between violin and piano, emphasizing the emotional and musical rapport between these two musicians. Total duration is 62'26. Liner notes by Michael Stevens.

CD LR 226 JOE MORRIS: *NO VERTIGO*

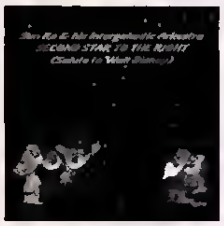
A solo CD by a Bostonian guitarist "who is perhaps the most exciting and original jazz plucker to emerge in the last decade" (Down Beat). Joe Morris plays acoustic guitar, mandolin, electric guitar and banjouke. He says: "My goal is to make unique music that will surprise you while remaining open to interpretations". This CD is destined to become a manual for generations of guitar players young and old. Total duration 76'24.

CD LR 227 TIBOR SZEMZO: *TRACTATUS*

A new work by Tibor Szemzo took six months of hard work in the studio to produce, yet it is only 30 minutes and 30 seconds long. We dared to put it on the CD because it is a masterpiece. Anything else next to this composition inspired by the writings of one of the greatest minds on this planet ("Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" by Ludwig Wittgenstein) would be counter productive.

CD LR 228 / 229 ABRAHAM ADZINYAH / ANTHONY BRAXTON: *DUO (WESLEYAN) 1994*

A double CD documenting a complete concert at Wesleyan University in front of an appreciative audience. A 100-minute dialogue between a master percussionist and an amazing saxophonist who plays his whole arsenal of saxophones and clarinet. Sit and watch how ideas are being born, developed and brought to a close, just to start it all over again.



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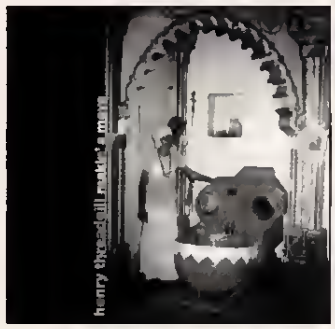
Japanese shakuhachi players, and himself via 'ghost' pianos triggered by his own plugged-in keyboard. *Cyberband* is an all-star jam session with similarly hot-wired colleagues assembled at the 93 Moers (Germany) festival. The seven spontaneous compositions, created by mix-and-match combos of the seven participants, display a dazzling density of voicings and layered information — from 'pure' electronic tones to mimicked acoustics, *musique concrète* references, found material and everything in between.

The confusion of sources means that the players' identity may get lost in the shuffle — is that piercing string wail from Fred Frith's guitar, Carlos Zingaro's processed fiddle or Tom Cora's computerised cello? Is that orchestral section a pre-recorded sample from Teitelbaum's keyboards pulled off a CD by Otomo Yoshihide, or merely a multidubbed George Lewis? And what are Michel Waisvisz's mysterious electronic Hands doing? In the larger ensembles there's some unfocused hubbub and a few grand theatrical gestures, the smaller groupings are the most clearly defined. But the amazing range of colours and timbres never clouds the issue: that of the compatibility of sounds regardless of their point of origin.

Teitelbaum has a track record of more formal composition as well, and *Golem*, defined as "interactive opera", is his most ambitious construction to date. A multimedia theatre piece with mesmerising visual effects, *Golem* uses the Jewish folk tale of a Rabbi who brings to life a Frankenstein-type creation to probe into psychological and philosophical questions of artificial intelligence without soul, intolerance, love, civilization and chaos.

The Golem is a haunting and haunted figure, innocent yet destructive, forged within the frightening collision of cultural beliefs and taboos, creation myths and apocalyptic visions. Working at the primal intersection of language, sound and ritual with pre-recorded electronic material as well as improvising vocalists and musicians, Teitelbaum's music, rich in allusions, evokes wonder, terror, and concern over our future and that of technology. Even without the stunning visual component — videodisc and slide projections (symbols of mysticism and magic, human faces and inhuman shapes) and atmospheric lighting — *Golem* strikes sparks in areas of the soul we little understand and seldom visit.

ART LANGE



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Sub Rosa: through Cargo

Henry Threadgill
Makin' A Move
COLUMBIA 481 131 CD

With the current plethora of musical exotica, it's hard to make surprising sounds. *Makin' A Move* achieves a triumphant oddness. It's a Bill Laswell production job (as were Threadgill's Columbia debut *Carry The Day*, and *Too Much Sugar For A Dime* on Laswell's Axiom label) and features a further extension of his carefully written experiments with textures. Very Very Circus, his regular two-tuba, double circus ring of a group, play on most of the tracks, the rest are given over to stranger ensembles yet. One features piano plus guitar quartet, another has Henry (on alto) plus cello trio, another combines alto with both the guitar and cello groupings.

Threadgill's own soloing, particularly with the cello trio, is its usual abrasive self. The album is striated with music from other times and cultures, which, instead of being worn on the sleeve, are beautifully incorporated into Threadgill's plans. This ability to subsume his borrowings to his own creative ends is a major part of what makes Threadgill's work so impressive. Of course, a lot of it is down to the instrumentation: even a rock guitar solo is shockingly recontextualised over a pair of tubas. But the skill with which he orchestrates the various ingredients (and the tunes themselves, dammit) make for searching music indeed. Threadgill's work, through Air and his Sextett to Very Very Circus, is a testament to the enduring importance of the AACM's attitudes towards composition. 30 years later this legacy, along with the more recent work of musician-composers like Bobby Previte and Tim Berne, is turning post-jazz composition into one of the richest strands in contemporary music.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Simon Fisher Turner
Nadja
GYROSCOPE GYR 6617 CD

Reviewing the soundtrack album of a film you haven't seen poses particular challenges. It's not possible to evaluate how sound and image work together, so contextual details become important clues. *Nadja* is a film about vampires in Manhattan, its executive producer is David Lynch, the CD packaging is night-black and blood-red, there are tracks called "Allergy To Sunlight" and "Stake In The Heart", and the score was composed by Simon Fisher Turner — best known for his work with Derek Jarman. All of which should promise music demanding adjectives like 'brooding', 'sensual', 'unnerving' and 'perverse'.

Nadja scores high on all four, but the problem is that while a dash of brooding perversity would enhance anyone's life, too much of it, like too much of any one mood, leads to monotony. With visuals attached, this music probably works very well — and indeed there are moments when if you half-close your eyes you can really see cloaked figures scurrying down alleyways — but by itself, its limited repertoire soon becomes stale. Its menu only has three dishes: slow, tension-building crescendos, electronic washes of urban edginess, and chamber music strings for those post-Anne Rice touches of Transylvanian tristesse. These are all exercises in tone alone, occasionally evocative but rootless and unspecific, leaving you absurdly grateful when some solidity in the shape of a rhythm track turns up belatedly on two of the nine pieces. Sampled lines of dialogue from the film (*"I find comfort in shadows"*, *"I can't believe I'm letting you do this to me"*) add a little enigmatic narrative roughage here and there, but fail to stop the overall drift into unrewarding sameness. Only "Isle Of Spices", one long, stealthy rising curve of layered anxiety merits repeated listening.

The presence of Lynch might suggest that we are invited to read the soundtrack's more cliched deployments of horror film sonics as knowing irony, never more so than when Fisher Turner presses the 'spooky' button and introduces a ghostly organ on loan from *Scooby Doo*, but wit is generally in short supply. If the film, once it opens, gets its teeth into you, then *Nadja* may prove to be a cherishable souvenir. Otherwise, approach with garlic.

ANDY MEDHURST

Various Artists
A History Of Hardcore
SUBURBAN BASE/MOVING SHADOW JOINT MT 3 CD/MC

A 40 track compilation which charts the development of Jungle in the first half of the 90s, mixed by veteran DJ Kenny Ken. If Jungle's ancestral relationship with ragga and HipHop is easy to ascertain, its Techno/House lineage is more obscure. *A History Of Hardcore* helpfully remembers the mutation of Jungle from early 90s rave culture.

The collection captures the drift from stroboscopic rave tunes such as Cosmo & Dibs's "Up Keys" and Q Bass's "Dancing People", which demonstrate how breakbeats were introduced as colour, variation and ambiguity. By the time of the skewed analogue bass warp of Cloud 9's "You Got Me Burnin'" and Sons Of A Loop Da Loop Era's "Peace And Lovism" these variations had taken on a mind of their on. Then, somewhere between the swinging breakbeat Techno of Cosmo & Dibs's helium anthem "Xultation" and the nutty cartoon cuts and syncopations of Austen's "Rude Boy", Hyper-On Experience's "Thunder Grip" and DJ Hype's "Weird Energy" — all blatantly original tracks — a new style is born, its early flowering represented here by D'Cruze and Omni Trio. The compilation then charts the rise of the ragga influence and thus drum 'n' bass as we know it, of which DJ Hype's "Roll The Beats", Renegade's "Terrorist" and Dream Team's "Stamina" are all essential examples. The dense, claustrophobic hardstep of Johnny Jungle's "Killer Sound" represents a particularly extreme moment, and Kenny Ken's neat cut into Aqua Sky's more placid "Dezires" explains clearly why more Ambient and soul-influenced (though not necessarily soul*ful*) so-called 'Intelligent' styles developed alongside all the high pressure snares and brutal basslines.

Definitive though much of the 1994-95 material here is, the middle period tracks sound particularly fresh and exciting. Early tunes by Krome & Time, Omni Trio and Sonz Of A Loop (an early pseudonym for Droppin' Science's Danny Breaks) do not fit easily into any genre and bristle with energy and invention as a result. I suspect some of these odd cut 'n' paste-ups might be as much accidental as design, as if their makers were so excited by so many new possibilities they didn't know what to try next. Though these DIY models have been superceded by grander and more sophisticated sounds today, their infectious enthusiasm survives the few years since they were made. Funny how something widely perceived as primitive and *stupid* one minute becomes a bona fide classic the next: a victory of the imagination.

A History Of Hardcore contains many gems and helps to explain how such an inventive and radically *different* kind of dance music could have surged out of one of pop music's deepest lows. Its DJ mix format is, for once, the ideal vehicle for such a history, and by going into the earlier material more thoroughly it succeeds where other compilations, such as Kodwo Eshun's otherwise excellent *Routes From The Jungle*, have failed. Not the best compilation to buy for a survey on what's happening this week on Jungle's ever changing horizon, but as a piece of deep research into the origins of a still-evolving music it's an essential purchase.

RICHARD SCOTT

Various Artists
Mesmer Variations
ASH 1 BCD 2CD

Various Artists
Statics
CCI CCD 25002 CD

Digital music has few parallels for getting the measure of things — all it needs to do is scan them into the computer and replicate them. The problem is, all too often musicians exploring the near and far sides of silence get hypnotised by the stillness of the atmospheres their pieces set out to simulate. They become so taken with their simulacra, they either forego or lose the ability to discriminate between what's interesting and what is not. Fine if you're a documenter, but catastrophic if you're a composer. The catastrophe is compounded on a compilation like *Mesmer Variations*, where the listener might be forgiven for thinking that the compilers — in this case, the people from the audio-word-graphic collective Touch — would perform the edit function seemingly ceded to them by too many of the contributors to this two hour-plus double CD. On the contrary, the compilers provide them with the bogus theoretical back-up to lazily conceived and incomplete works, where the process is passed off as end result. The musicians were invited, open-briefed, to respond to an earlier set dedicated to the 18th century German scientist Franz Anton Mesmer, from whose name comes the word mesmerism. So what you get is a plastic wallet stuffed with loose leaf hypnographs, nice engravings and schoolmarm-like sleevenotes whose droning tone echoes through a slew of sound that few people will want to spend the rest of their lives sifting through for the odd nugget. The names are enticing enough — Bruce Gilbert, Graham Lewis, Robert Hampson, Ryoji Ikeda — but none ought to count these among their best works. In all, another Touch package to be seen, if you really must, and not heard.

Don't let Ryoji Ikeda's Mesmer involvement put you off the *Statics* compilation for his own CCI label. Granted, some contributors here also suffer the delusion that a composer's work is done once he's digitally minted or retrieved an interesting sound. Though it gets off to a woefully dull start with Darrin Verhagen's "Soft Ash", things immediately pick up with Akira Yamamichi's "Phenomenized Soundscapes" (contoured from a wind-worn topography), and the quality is sustained through pieces from Jim O'Rourke, Kazuhiko Kinami (a gorgeous reading of Messiaen's *Le Banquet Céleste*), Paul Schütze and David Toop, whose "Iron Perm" quilts its disparate elements — shortwave squiggles, deeply resonant chime sounds, echo bass — with knots of guitar fuzz. In fact, Toop's guitar intrusion is a timely reminder that silence in itself is fine, but the importance of the composer's silence — to paraphrase Joseph Beuys's comment about Duchamp — is overrated.

BIBA KOPF

Various Artists
Planet Dub
PLANET DOG BARKCD D15 2CD

Various Artists
Club Meets Dub V1.0
ZIP DOG RECORDS ZD5 CD

Digidub
16 Millionths Of An Inch
INCOMING! INC! CD 3305 CD

Digital technology has long since codified the instinctive innovations of

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mid-70s Jamaica What was once the product of seat-of-the-pants experimentation and alchemical insight is now available to all-comers as an array of seductive presets encased in unyielding black boxes Most modern dub is now the province of unrepentant stoners fixated on the bewitching forms conjured up by the pioneering adventures of King Tubby and Jammy, and motivated mainly by the need to make the stupefaction more intense, more engulfing

This school of thought (or reverie) is well represented on the *Planet Dub* compilation In contrast with Kevin Martin's recent *Macro Dub Infection* collection — which was all about tracing the lines of influence that have transplanted the spirit of dub into newer breeds like drum 'n' bass and TripHop — *Planet Dub* seems concerned with demonstrating that some people liked it just the way it was, thanks very much

This sort of music is best seen as a tool — just as the nematode writhing of 303 Acid noise in a OJ Pierre or Josh Wink track is specifically designed to trigger the pleasure circuits in nerve receptors thoroughly wired by MOMA, so the whooshing echoes of 90s digidub serve to heighten the languorous buzz of the thoroughly caned There's nothing wrong with that, of course It's just that if you're after sonic experimentalism, you should be looking elsewhere Amniotically immersed in a haze of dope and Special Brew, the music here has a tendency to rely too heavily on the presets, to let itself go unquestioningly with the flow of both chemical and digital programming Sometimes, as on Full Moon Scientists' "The Exit Of Ambient Sense", you feel like you're listening to nothing more than a sluggish MIDI-party, a concatenation of digital effects juicing each other with random shots of echo

There are some revelatory moments — Hempolics' "Burning Oub" seems to have copped a decent earful of Jungle's journeys in sound, and gives a fair approximation of Mad Professor's restless audacity thanks to wildly lurching volume levels and invigorating spates of high frequency white noise Generally, though, the hard-edged thrust of innovation is constantly swathed in a narcoleptic cloud of reproduction reverb

Club Meets Dub attempts to update dub for the dancefloor, but hits upon the pharmaceutical snag that comes inevitably with any cocktail of uppers and downers — the two elements neutralise one another, producing only an insipid, hybrid torpor This collection is at its worst when explicitly aping Jungle, transforming the hyperkinetic rush of the original into a two-dimensional silhouette devoid of internal dynamics

Far more intriguing is Digidub's *16 Millionths Of An Inch* Maybe 'Neo-Oub' is the right term for this music — the group seems ready to abandon the Jammy/Perry/Tubby tempo blueprint and embark on the psychedelicisation of more recent rhythmic schools Often, the energetic drum programming recalls the mid-80s spirit of dancehall epitomised by Wayne Smith's pivotal "Sleng Teng" — but woven between the perky clarity of the beats are Asian textures and bouts of nervy ambience Sometimes, the blend seems a trifle directionless — "Nepturanous 200B93" is a straight-up composite of Augustus Pablo melodica and "No UFOs"-era Model 500, with a few *Star Wars* laser noises thrown in for good measure the result is baffling rather than enthralling Elsewhere, though, there are helpings of Hafler Trio-esque strangeness — three tracks on the record claim to sample the vibrations from the recent conjunction of Neptune and Uranus — and tangy chunks of analogue crackle Best of all is the final track, "Routemaster", where quivering bursts of bus engine noise punctuate a swirling, Coiling soundscape This fascinating melange of mechanistic throbs and distorted Electronica abandons the dancehall for good to dub up Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire for the 90s

CHRIS SHARP

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Stephan Wittwer/ Martin Schütz/Paul Lovens
Choice-Chase
INTAKT 032 CD

Swiss guitarist Stephan Wittwer seems to enjoy being part of a Euro-freeform trio (for further proof, refer to *Red Twist & Tuned Arrow*, his ECM record with Christy Ooran and Fredy Studer). It's a format that allows him to indulge in complex interplay with his fellow musicians before launching some monster solo which is aimed directly at his audience

Choice-Chase is a fabulous example of this group's power and progress Part studio and part live, these early 90s recordings are shot through with real spirit Like all good improvised music performances that have been captured on record, it is sometimes difficult to figure out just how each musician is dragging a certain sound from his instrument Martin Schutz turns in some splendid scraping from his assorted electric and acoustic cellos, sounding at one point like some huge Kafkaesque beetle that is emitting alien squeaks and drones from inside its wooden, stringed carapace Lovens too is energetic and inventive, slashing at his kit one minute and urging tender timbres from his collection of cymbals the next. Lovens, a long accomplished master of percussion, is here captured in top form, and it is a thrill to hear him at work

The mainspring of the group and the firing power behind *Choice-Chase*, however, is Wittwer, whose guitar improvisations soar and dive like some taloned musical bird of prey, beautiful to observe but also dark and threatening His playing here is several notches up from the more fusion-inspired ECM venture, and wanders into territory that Sonny Sharrock left behind at the early stage of his career and which Caspar Brotzmann has recently retrieved and nurtured back into life Wittwer adds to that tradition his own brand of string bending and feedback which, when connected to Schütz and Lovens, reels off into a blistering barrage of emotion and ideas

EDWIN POUNCEY

The XIII Ghosts
Giganti Reptilicus Destructo Beam
SCATTER 04 CD

Spaceheads
Spaceheads
RED NOTE 3 CD

Bark
Our Traditional Values
SRUTI BOX SBMC07 MC

You could be mistaken for thinking that improvised music in the 90s is the

exclusive province of men approaching their fifties Here are three CDs by 'youngsters' connected to the free music scene which disprove half of that assumption Step aside old folks, here's the new blood a-boilin'

Ostensibly, The XIII Ghosts are the duo of clarinettist Alex Ward (something of a prodigy, he made his first CD for Derek Bailey's Incus Records while still in his teens) and the admirably 'wild card' electronics person Switch On this CD, however, studio sessions with a variety of 'elder brothers' (including Pat Thomas and Jim Denley) are given a second level of structure through seamless editing ("Spectral Moon Rock" becomes "Carl Spurts His Wad" becomes "Dub Muffin"), a series of dramatic highlights are themed akin to a horror movie This, along with the absurdist, self-mythologising sleeve notes and 'wacky' artwork, imply a different interface with the listener than that of the bare documentary approach most frequently associated with Improv Heresy to some, but actually very user-friendly Try it.

The Spaceheads — trumpeter Andy Diagram and percussionist Dick Harrison — are a key node in a web of activity and this CD capitalises on and celebrates that fact by including collaborations with friends from Stock, Hausen & Walkman, Put Put, Barbed and others It's essentially a drums/trumpet duo plus friends combination, although this is not the whole story by any means Sound sources are obscured and transformed, and a variety of different modes of production, styles and moods are deployed in a rich mix that is contradictory yet complimentary

Although a working live duo (they contributed the highlight track of Disobey's *3 Fingers & A Fumb* compilation earlier this year) there are perhaps three tracks here recorded as played, without overdubs Other pieces have been developed over time, multi-tracked, deconstructed, or reconstructed and reconfigured entirely from samples From bright pop to distorted dance music to more ambiguous noisescapes there's a life-affirming wealth of material to be enjoyed here

The merits of the latest recording from Bark (one of a number of improvisation-embracing groups that include *The Wire* contributor Richard Scott) are less obvious and more subtle and therefore *Our Traditional Values* (a cassette-only release "recorded on location in England in 1993 and 1994") lacks the crossover potential of those above Like The Ghosts, the often conversational group development has its basis in 'close listening' but is much cooler, more cerebral and less dramatic Personal highlights include Phil Marx's fractured-funk drumming interfacing with Rex Caswell's guitar, and tuba player Robin Hayward's composition "Not Xarb", which gives Scott a base for some genuinely impassioned, ridiculously high-register soprano work

PHIL ENGLAND

in brief **electronica**

Peter McIntyre looks for pearls in the analogue bubblebath

Benge Electro Orgoustic Music EXPANDING EXPANDCD195 CD Bit of an oddity, this one It consists of seven tracks, titled by their duration and produced by a Peter Perrett lookalike called BD Edwards Beyond that, I know very little I don't even know why I like it I think it's because, amid all the posturing and pretension of much of today's Electronica, Edwards has seized upon a simple truth certain acoustic instruments share tonal and textural characteristics with synthesizers and hence blend well Simple piano chords, sonorous sax lines, even on one track ("7 13") a wind chime all form a fine counterpoint/counterpart to the spiralling, warping and stuttering synth sounds beneath and between them Let's hear it for the power of simplicity

Brain Pilot Mind Fuel NOVA ZEMBLA NZ037 CD **Paranonia Paranonia** NOVA ZEMBLA NZ021 CD **Starfish Pool Amplified Tones** NOVA ZEMBLA NZ034 CD Both Brain Pilot and Paranonia fall prey to that most damaging and stigmatising of technological viruses premature obsolescence Their world of rigid

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rhythm, motorik pulses and gleaming edifices of pre-programmed sound is clean, bright and completely characterless Brain Pilot, at least, seem to acknowledge the existence of an alternative world, but lack suitable grid references to reach it. Paranoia's "Aqualine", on the other hand, tries to convey a sense of nostalgic melancholy as we head into a brave new century, yearning for an already redundant future Starfish Pool embrace the magical powers of the computer *Amplified Tones* is concerned not so much with amplification as transmutation Sound sources are warped out of all recognition, rhythms are distilled to their very essence and stretched towards entropy until they're in danger of folding in upon themselves Throughout, the guiding hand is the process itself, the invisible yet inexorable whirring of the omnipotent technology, reaching its apex in "Undraped", where the servomechanics, the very workings of the hardware, seem to take precedence over the music being created

Cherry Bomb Electronics For Dogs FREDAG NUVEUX FDAG1 CD/2LP Richard Brown (aka Cherry Bomb) assisted on Autechre's *Incunabula* LP, and has been a production regular for Beaumont Hannant. *Electronics For Dogs* shares certain characteristics with these sonic standard bearers The Techno-rock fusion of "Internot" is a tactic used by Hannant, while the austere melancholy of the closing "Zoppo" is worthy of the Manchester duo Between these two points, however, Brown carves out a distinct identity supple, ergonomic electronics, buoyed up by perky rhythms and given a production sheen punctuated at intervals by jagged shards of harsh noise

Cusp Space + Time * Liquids + Metals SWIM WMB CD It's much easier to be impressed by the music of Mark Gage (best known as Vapourspace, here recording as Cusp) than to fall in love with it. This compilation-plus of the material that he recorded for Richie Hawtin's Probe label is a testament to the power of digital editing, as was his *Themes From Vapourspace* album of last year but, ultimately, it's music that keeps you at a distance, content to luxuriate in its own process The sound quality is outstanding — this may well be the first surroundsound Techno — but it's just too perfect.

Disjecta Looking For Snags WARP WAP6B CD/2EP The first solo project from Seefeel's Mark Clifford is an eight track EP of inverted music Skeletal, metallic rhythms are pushed to the fore, while minimal synth textures, dredged through Clifford's hallucinatory sensibilities, create a musical vision closer in spirit to the work of Jodorowsky or The Brothers Quay than the more formulaic utopian/dystopian futures envisaged by most contemporary Electronica This is the sound of machines being stretched a little too tautly, producing music that threatens to implode, crushed under its own weight. And, beneath it all, the rumble of distant danger, felt rather than heard

Electronic Eye The Idea Of Justice BEYDNO RBACD14 CD More upbeat than last year's paranoia-riddled *Closed Circuit* LP, this album marks a welcome return to form for one of the elder statesmen of the UK electronic scene Richard Kirk is a sonic collagist par excellence, but where cut-ups were once his very building blocks, they're now the bas-relief in his sonic architecture With a strong foundation of cool avant funk, he constructs his music using sampled elements of jazz, dub and ethno-Electro chicanery, layered over varispeed rhythms inspired by and sourced from the dark continent. The result is ju-ju magic, a Tardis in sound, bigger inside than out

Alec Empire Low On Ice (The Iceland Sessions) MILLE PLATEAUX MP1B CD Recorded on a portable studio over a three day period while touring Iceland with his group Atari Teenage Riot, this third release from the Berlin technopunk is a step up from the cacophonous *Sturm und Drang* of *Generation Star Wars*. Shivering in a land where night can last for days and temperatures can drop as low as 30 below, *Low On Ice* fuses minimal, angular electronics and jagged rhythms with crystalline synths sparkling over vast bass spaces to create frozen tundras of sound whose glacial majesty reflects the desolate beauty of the landscape in which they were created A chilly classic

The Future 3 We Are The Future 3 APRIL APR010 CD Future 3 are natives of Denmark, but their approach is a long way from the withering rigour of their geographical neighbours the Sähko label Theirs is a more fluid music, drawing upon the clipped languor of TripHop and occasionally phase-shifting into the timestretched rhythms of drum 'n' bass Where their music wins out over the more pedestrian practitioners of these genres is in the droning synths and clouds of digital aether that swirl beneath the beats The contrast between the essentially static soundscapes and the more kinetic hypersonics of the rhythms creates a sense of confusion far more interesting than the smug, referential self-satisfaction of a sampled jazz ambience

MRM Minimal Resource Manipulation SUBURBS OF HELL SOH022 CD There's a marked Industrial influence creeping back into mainstream Electronica these days — witness the new Biomuse LP on Tony Thorpe's Language imprint. MRM work in a similar way, taking base materials from Techno and Industrial sources and filtering them through the machinery of dub, leavening the whole with a funky edge The resultant collages jitter, hiss and clatter along, dropping out of sight, only to reappear roaring madly, one moment nagging at your senses, the next pummelling them into submission It's about audio sensory overload "Undercarriage" is like wandering blind in a video games arcade, equilibrium is hard to maintain

Repeat Repeats A13 AA002 CD/2LP **Mind Over Rhythm Mind Over Rhythm Meets The Boys From Plaid On The Planet Luv** RUMBLE 001 CD/4EP Repeat is a collaboration between Plaid, DJ/producer Mark Broom and Dave Hill With such a collective gene pool of talent, it's little wonder that the music skates over a multitude of styles, from the smooth Detroit sound of "Lilt-A", through HipHop, jazz, even calypso, to the superlative "Tomorrow People", where the spirit of George Duke is let loose in an Eastern bazaar Broom and his Ifach imprint appear to be the guiding influence on the sound — warm and mellow on the outside with a dark heart beating below — but the whole venture feels constrained, as if the studio is too small to contain all the ideas I wish they'd let go and fly Plaid also make two fleeting appearances on longtime companion Alan Hill's Mind Over Rhythm album While neither of their tracks compare with their recent and superb Clear EP, they still contain enough of that elusive X-factor As for Hill, he produces workmanlike if unadventurous Techno, with the notable exception of "Retro 7," a 60s spy theme rewired through 90s technology

Single Cell Orchestra Dead Vent 7 REFLECTIVE REFCD4/REFLP2 CD/LP This recorded performance of a sci-fi script, written by Single Cell Orchestra's Miguel Fierro and author Michael Katz, is an ambitious venture Too many projects of this kind seem to falter once they've left the launchpad Fierro avoids this by roaming the galaxies of sound for the apposite style to suit the needs of the script Hence, a sequenced Techno pulse soundtracks a spacecraft's jump to hyperspace, considered, minimal ambience accompanies a careful search, and endorphin-fuelled breakbeats cluster and disperse frantically as a battle rages Narrative continuity is further maintained by the inclusion of dialogue, fleshing out the plot — details that the music can only suggest.

Vulse Inside DECEMBER DAWN DCR0005 CD With its penchant for vistas of sound and yearning for imaginary landscapes, electronic music carries perhaps the most developed sense of the visual aesthetic of all musical genres *Inside* is essentially a collection of soundtracks looking for a movie to call home The reflective, echoed piano of "Euthanism" and "Porphyria" create an ironic, detached feel, reminiscent of film *noir*, the hushed, spiritual tones of "Creston" and "Loins And Lace" drift forward in Tarkovskian time frames, while the rolling arpeggios of "Syrup And Sand" recall the more kinetic film works of Tangerine Dream It's a multiplex in sound unfortunately, it's only showing old films □

new notes at a glance

information from SPNM

december

new notes, the monthly listings brochure published by SPNM, is an essential guide to what and who's happening in new music, specialising in the composed music circuit. Events listed in full in **new** notes also appear in these pages – we're sure you'll want to sample what's on offer!
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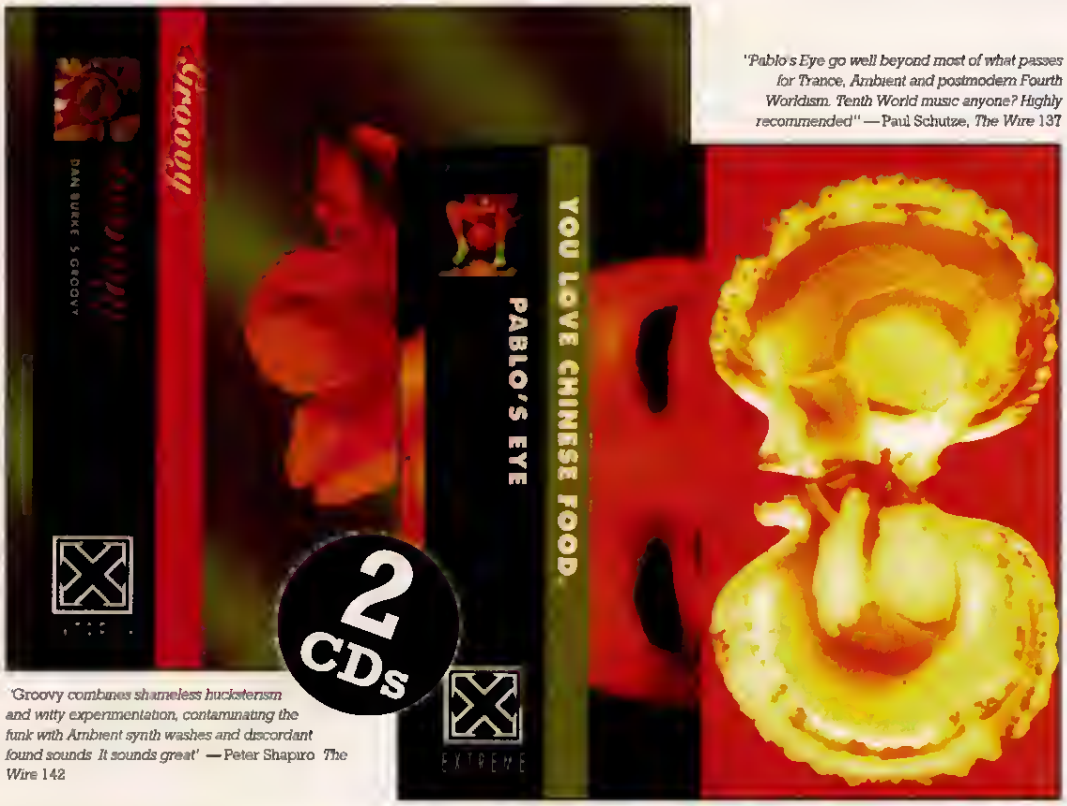

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'Groovy combines shameless hucksterism and witty experimentation, contaminating the funk with Ambient synth washes and discordant found sounds. It sounds great' — Peter Shapiro *The Wire* 142

Groovy/Pablo's Eye

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THE WIRE

adventures in modern music

Robert Wyatt

Continued from page 40

days, they got us out of some horrendous tight spots when our equipment blew up, and they would lend us some — and groups don't do things like that. And then to me, they were very generous when I had my accident. [Pink Floyd organised and headlined a benefit concert for Wyatt in the same year]

Musically, it's very refreshing to hear that. I'm ashamed to say I didn't know it, but I'm ashamed to say I didn't know The Raincoats, but there you are. But I don't actually have rock records to listen to particularly. I see rock music as a boy-next-door activity. Rock doesn't have any romantic associations for me. It's what people like us used to do [laughs], the kind of things we got up to. That's all I feel about it, but having said that, I thought it was very inventive. I enjoyed it very much.

The Canterbury Scene we mentioned before has acquired a sort of mythic status over time, but not as much as the 67 UFO Club scene. Was it really as exciting as it's been made out to be?

Well, you have to forgive people involved if they're subjective. The subjective facts are I couldn't play in the 60s. It took me a long time. So I associate the entire decade — if there is such a thing as a decade — with excruciating embarrassment on my own part. And it's bound to colour what you think about a place or a time. Objectively, I'd say it was good, yeah. It was good in the sense that the groups weren't the only thing, just part of what was going on.

It was almost like having a big indoor market, really. We [Soft Machine] used to go down there and play, and sometimes they'd have Monteverdi playing, and the atmosphere would already be perfect. All you'd need was Monteverdi playing and people wandering about, or lying on the floor and things like that, and Mark Boyle's and various other people's film projections all over the walls, and already that was it, the atmosphere. And then there would be the groups. It didn't rely on the groups, it was a place to be anyway. As a stage, the audience were all in the play. And except for a few stars in the old style like Arthur Brown, who was wonderful, most people were fairly anonymous. They would just be there as part of making the scene.

I think at that time, I was still too much of a jazz and blues fan to quite be able to tune into what they [Pink Floyd] were doing. The bands I knew in London before them were Zoot Money and Georgie Fame. I was more used to the Ornette Colemans and the Sun Ras, and compared with what was going on [in jazz] by the mid-60s, even the most non-poppy pop groups seemed fairly tame to me, and fairly commercial. That's not a criticism, it's just a fact.

TONY WILLIAMS WITH MILES DAVIS

"Agitation" from *ESP* (Columbia)

[During Williams's long drum solo introduction] Sounds like Elvin Jones. It's not? Good Lord! He was very influenced by Elvin Jones — School of Elvin Jones. [Trumpet comes in] Well. Oh, in that case it's Jack DeJohnette.

It's not actually.

Hang on. OK. It's Tony Williams. Stupid, I

am! Oh God, shoot that man. What a funny mistake to make. But that's a really interesting mistake, because I'd never thought of Tony Williams as being anything like Elvin Jones. But that early section and the business of stumbling over where you expect the bar-line to be, is such an Elvin Jones-y thing. And it's a much deeper sound than I associate with Tony Williams: he usually has a much lighter, crisper sound.

It was a very important time for Miles Davis. He never really recovered from the loss of Coltrane and he nearly went under then, I get the impression. But it was finding Tony Williams and doing a whole new thing that put him back on track. I don't know this one, I have to say. This is terrific, I really like this.

It's from *ESP* from 1965.

I should have this, let alone know it. Miles Davis started recording when I was born and he's been there all my life. And if someone asked me what was my very favourite voice sound ever, I'd have to say Miles Davis. There's a jazz writer, lives in Paris, called Mike Zwerin, who I've been in touch with again recently. He reminded me that one of [Miles's] bon mots — he lives in France so he can say things like that — was 'play half'. And that's exactly right. It's got a Zen appeal to it. The first time you hear it you think, 'Oh, that's easy, I've only got to play half', and then you think, 'Which half?' [Laughs] Miles Davis is one of the great jazz philosophers. It pisses me off when people list great philosophers and only list great philosophical writers, because to me some of the great philosophers weren't writers, they were people who did other things. Thelonious Monk or Miles Davis.

BRIAN ENO

"My Squelchy Life" from *Nerve Net* (Opal/Warner Bros)

I was going to play you another piece [ie Eno's "My Squelchy Life"] but it seems I've recorded over the tape by mistake.

You'll have to hum it! [After about 20 seconds of me humming] Ah, hang on, that could be Johnny Rotten. Don't tell me, because I know who that is. That's stupid — I just remember him saying something about sex once that that reminds me of. Of course it's Brian. I think Brian would be very amused, first of all that you sang "My Squelchy Life" and I said 'Johnny Rotten'. And secondly, I would think this is only acceptable if you point out that we've broken new ground here, in that you've not actually played the record and I commented on it. I think it's appropriate, Brian would really appreciate that.

I have no objective opinion of Brian at all. I just consider him a great friend and an utterly good bloke. What else can I say? Brian and I used to spend a lot of time together in the 70s just talking and hanging about. Which, despite this thing about various scenes I may have been on, I don't remember doing with musicians on the whole. We used to have such fun. That's why it's so appropriate you didn't play the record, because we used to have fun imagining things that there could be. One of the things was in the 70s there wasn't the word World Music. We thought wouldn't it be great to get all these records that we were listening to from all around the world, totally nothing to do with pop or rock 'n' roll or jazz or American music, anything like that, anything to do with Europe at all, and you could find tracks that would appeal to people and just package it like pop music. It's difficult to explain now that kind of idea has become commonplace, in fact hackneyed, how exciting it was at that time to draw up these sort of thoughts. He was a very enjoyable person to think with. I find that thinking out loud with Brian is incredibly good exercise for the brain.

You performed on *Music For Airports* in the late 70s, which is now regarded as a landmark in Ambient music. The idea that it was equally valid to listen to or ignore the music seemed very radical at the time.

That's perhaps why we got on well, because I do like that thing that he does and we both do, which is, 'What if you turn the situation upside down, whatever the assumption or premise might be?' You're banging your head on the wall to try and do something to grab people's attention — what if you do the opposite? [Laughs] Ideas circulate and I'm very loath to attribute ideas solely to one person or anything. This question of authorship wouldn't really be a battleground [for Eno]. Although he is a fountain of ideas, he wouldn't promote himself necessarily as such, because he's interested in the circulation of them, and they go through various processes.

I remember a thing that I'd mentioned that I'd come across from Miles Davis. He [Miles] was talking about how to arrange things in a piece of music. And Miles Davis basically wouldn't tell anybody what to do — his arrangement was the choice of musicians you had in the first place. And Brian thought that was terrific and went on to do some things like that, where you wouldn't tell anyoody what to do — the arrangement was choosing the musicians. And so that idea you can't attribute either to him, or to me, I think you'd have to attribute it to Miles Davis, but the point is, the idea was very illuminating.

Eno always used to describe himself as a 'non-musician'.

I don't know what it means in rock 'n' roll, frankly. [Laughs] As opposed to who? Dave Clarke? What are we talking about here? But that's good. It's the great saving thing about pop music. There's a lot of pop music you only have to be able to hear in your head to be able to do it. But that only makes it like conversation. There's nothing wrong with that — doesn't mean it's crap. □

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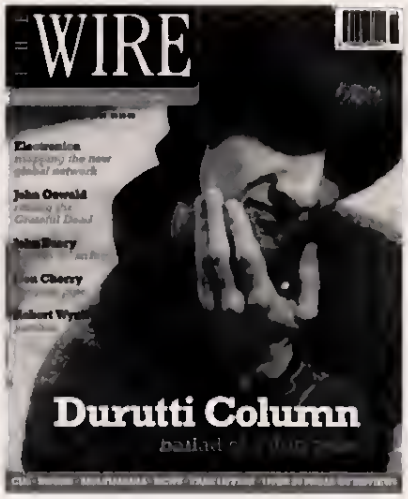

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In this month's books section:
Hendrix in the studio; IRCAM's hi-tech illusions; the self-mythologising of Charles Mingus

Jimi Hendrix

Jimi Hendrix Sessions

By John McDermott with Billy Cox and Eddie Kramer
LITTLE, BROWN & COMPANY (HBK £20)

Friday, 25 October, 1968 Jimi Hendrix plays bass on a Robert Wyatt demo recording called "Slow Walking Talk" Wyatt later re-recorded the piece as "Soup Song" for a John Peel session The Soft Machine and The Jimi Hendrix Experience were both managed by Mike Jeffrey, and toured the States together in spring 1968, performing 66 engagements in 60 days "You've gotta remember we're talking about a continuous period of total drunkenness," said Wyatt. Oh, and on "May This Be Love" (off the first Hendrix album, *Are You Experienced?*) you can just hear Hendrix turning over his lyric sheet while recording his lead vocal

There are lots of great facts like this in John McDermott's handsomely produced hardback. The paper is glossy, the pictures are bright and the layout is clear, though the absence of an index means that if you want to know why Hendrix wrote "Belly Button Window" (the intimate demo at the end of the posthumous *Cry Of Love* album) you have to flip through, rather than look it up under B (Billy Cox insists the song was about drummer Mitch Mitchell's expected baby)

The book is a companion to McDermott's *Hendrix: Setting The Record Straight*, a biography which Chas Chandler, Hendrix's producer, praises as the best he has read Following the model of Mark Lewisohn's *The Beatles Recording Sessions*, McDermott keeps a tight focus on Hendrix in the studio — the sessions are detailed one by one, from the first Chas Chandler booking in London (October 1966) to the opening of Hendrix's own Electric Lady studio in June 1970, just three months before his death at the age of 27

The early story is certainly gripping Chandler, The Animals' ex-bass player, discovers Hendrix in New York, brings him to London and auditions a bassist and drummer Bassist Noel Redding thought he was auditioning for guitarist with The Animals, while Mitch Mitchell was chosen against Aynsley Dunbar by the flip of a coin They charge into the studio, which Chandler can only afford to book for two hours at a time, and proceed to play so loud that the office computers upstairs fold up and die Hendrix starts playing through a hand-held wah-wah unit, and asks Mitchell to copy the sound of drum tapes played backwards. Engineer Eddie Kramer, a co-writer on the book, stretches the four-track machines to their limit to achieve the new sound Chandler and Hendrix are chasing. Chandler exercises a firm grip on the creative chaos, resulting in the extraordinary excitement of *Are You Experienced?*

By October 1967 *Axis: Bold As Love* is mixed by the same team Hendrix takes the master tapes to a party and loses them By May 1968 *Electric Ladyland* is almost finished, but Chandler walks out as producer Three amazing albums have been made, the group is burnt out, but the book is only one third through Hendrix enters two years of stardom coupled with long phases of sagging creativity and what McDermott calls the group's "staggering" drug use Chandler's focus and discipline are sorely missed

The latter part of the book contains a lot of the following "Hendrix, Cox and [Buddy] Miles, joined by an unnamed harmonica player, launched into a lengthy workout of "Blue Suede Shoes Unfortunately, the recording was marred by the unnamed harmonica player, who droned incessantly throughout." But if you're curious about Hendrix's studio jams, they're all here I also very much enjoyed the picture of The Vanilla Fudge throwing Mitch Mitchell into a swimming pool

CLIVE BELL

IRCAM, Boulez And The Institutionalization Of The Musical Avant Garde

By Georgina Born
CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY PRESS (HBK £45/PBK £14 95)

When structuralist theory is grafted onto music, the resulting product can be a surreal instrument of intellectual torture for instance, a cost benefit analysis of James Brown's timbral economy However the high-modernist culture at IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique) — France's Starship Enterprise for the post-serialist galaxy — courts conceptuality to such a degree that, as Born puts it, "characterising the forms of theory prescribing IRCAM compositions can to some extent obviate musical analysis"

The book is based on a field study undertaken, appropriately enough, in 1984 Infiltrating the levels of IRCAM's concrete and steel bunker, sunk below the Place Stravinsky, Born engaged in a year of participant observation, structural coding and interviews with the fallible human components who rode and dodged the equally fallible vectors of high-tech computer music.

The book uses Foucault, Bourdieu, Weber and Klein to analyse IRCAM's psychic fabric However, beneath the clinical apparatus of criticism, there is an engaging argument that aims to strip director Pierre Boulez of his Batman suit of vulcanised scientific discourse

When President Pompidou invited Boulez to help reconstruct French artistic life after 68, the alliance with computer technology seemed to offer an invincible new grounding for music Boulez's creed was that "the musician must assimilate a certain scientific knowledge, making it an integral part of his imagination" The assimilation of music to conceptual structures was pitted against the more eclectic "curiosity-shop aesthetics" of artists such as Cage, or the rival French institute GRM, home of *musique concrète*

IRCAM projects such as "Chant" and "Formes" aimed to simulate the physical laws of sound production, and provide a new generative base for composition Computer research on timbral transformations and inharmonics were part of a will to transparency in composition, and a total rational control of sound materials. For Born, IRCAM's glass office walls and security guards are more redolent of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison than an arts centre

IRCAM's ideology of autonomy required the maintenance of an absolute divide with popular culture, commerce or public approval Instead, ears were tuned to the immanent laws of music, a concern with legitimacy that inevitably led to a creative impasse

IRCAM's musical ideology was predicated on the ability of a giant computer system to reproduce and rebuild the inherited structures of music in a systematic way In practice, digital synthesis is fraught with technical hitches The visit of a British composer experimenting with timbral transition from oboe to soprano voice was a dire failure The technology was so complex and user unfriendly that, after three months' work, he produced 72 seconds of sound "Silence was being murdered by the atrocity of those vulgar sounds," read one of his e-mail messages

IRCAM is no Alphaville Constantly gnawing at its rhetoric was a reality of irrational practicalities — networks of informal patronage, would-be composers who infiltrated the system as technicians, hackers slumped over terminals, Michael Jackson's *Thriller* pumping down deserted corridors When the girlfriend of a junior worker produced a 'squatter' piece on IRCAM's technology and won a prize at the Darmstadt festival, the management weren't even aware of its existence Even more comically, the designer of the 4x, a musical power tool developed for Boulez's composition *Répons*, used it to play jazzed up Corelli

Born's most crucial discovery concerns IRCAM's implication in the realities of high-tech cultural warfare Until the mid-80s, the institute was heavily dependent on American computer music expertise The Americans there were more open to experimentation with small systems, and user friendly software This continually rankled because, for Boulez, big and hard was beautiful One conversation has him exclaiming that Apple Macs would come into IRCAM over his dead body IRCAM was to provide the vortex for a universalised culture centred on Paris Its rationale was to develop *the* cosmic system of musical aesthetics, not bedroom toys for Richard James.

Although the book is dated — IRCAM's culture has since changed to accept the relevance of the small systems field, as pioneered by Japan — Born's study is striking for the way it captures the power trajectories of cultural discourse at a particularly absolutist moment. As Jean-Claude Eloy had written in the early 80s, "IRCAM [is] nothing but a projection of the will for power"

IRCAM's big systems were levelled at American postmodernist composition like a cruise missile In fact, its hardware was so advanced that, in 1984, its main interface with external technology was through the military The 4x, the only IRCAM development to be taken up commercially, was bought as a flight simulator by a defence contractor, Sogitec As one technician sobs "The world's most beautiful and powerful musical instrument is being used to train people to kill other people"

MATT FFYTCHE

Beneath The Underdog

By Charles Mingus

PAYBACK PRESS (PBK £8 99)

Edited down from a manuscript three times as long, written in the early 60s but unpublished until 1971, Charles Mingus's notorious, Rabelaisian autobiography *Beneath The Underdog* hits the bookstores once again, courtesy of Edinburgh's Payback Press imprint, self-proclaimed saviours of some of the forgotten tributaries of African-American literature.

Though not one of grinding poverty,

Charles Mingus

PHOTO GÉRARD ROUY

Mingus's childhood in the burgeoning ghetto of Watts, Los Angeles was a virtual recipe for a pained adulthood a mother who died less than six months after he was born, an unbending and narrowly religious step-mother; a violent father who beat him for wetting the bed, rejection by both blacks and whites, being a "schitt-coloured half-ass yella phoney" to his peers (his mother was half-Chinese, half-English and his father was light-skinned enough to pass for white), and, as his musical interests grew, the realisation that racism would be a perpetual constraint on his creativity

Danny Richmond, Mingus's drummer, pinpointed the chief components of his employer's immensely complicated fantasy life "He wanted to be like a pimp, he wanted to be like a gangster, he wanted to be a musician, he wanted to be a great lover And, you know, he considered himself all of these people"

Beneath The Underdog is Mingus on the couch and is much concerned with fantasy It's a confessional autobiography that describes his life up to and including his brief and hellish (but initially voluntary) sojourn in Bellevue psychiatric hospital in 1958 In it he ostensibly elaborates a version of his life that is dominated by his troubled relations with women But it's more complicated than that, as it's not all true (as Mingus himself hints a couple of times) The book, a kind of chronicle of pnapic endeavour, is dominated by the pimp fantasy, clearly only a part of the man, and neither the most interesting or the most sympathetic part A pinch of salt (and a good deal of musical detail) is supplied by Brian Priestley's excellent biography of Mingus, alongside which *Beneath The Underdog* should be read

So what compelled Mingus to present himself in such a light? Early on he tells his shrink about the fascination of the pimp type "[It's] almost impossible to explain — how you feel when you're a kid and the king pimps come back to the neighbourhood They pose and twirl their watchchains and sport their new Cadillacs and Rollses and expensive tailored clothes It was like the closest thing to one of our kind becoming president of the USA When a young up-and-coming man reaches out to prove himself boss pimp, it's making it. That's what is meant where I come from — proving you're a man"

The let-down is that the book's way of speaking, mostly unreflective narrative, prevents it from exploring these ideas any further Many who have read the book before will recall the disappointment as the promise of ambiguity held in the first paragraph's declaration of a tripartite persona ("In other words I am three ") quickly dissolves, to be replaced by a wearying farrago of misogyny and big-dick bluster

On the plus side, the prose sporadically crackles into vibrant life, the accounts of his childhood in Watts are memorable, his use of dialogue to carry the story in the latter stages of the book is striking and there are moments of sharp wit But readers will have to work hard indeed to turn this into the book it could have been

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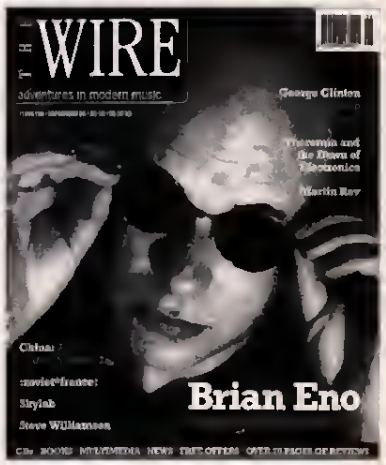

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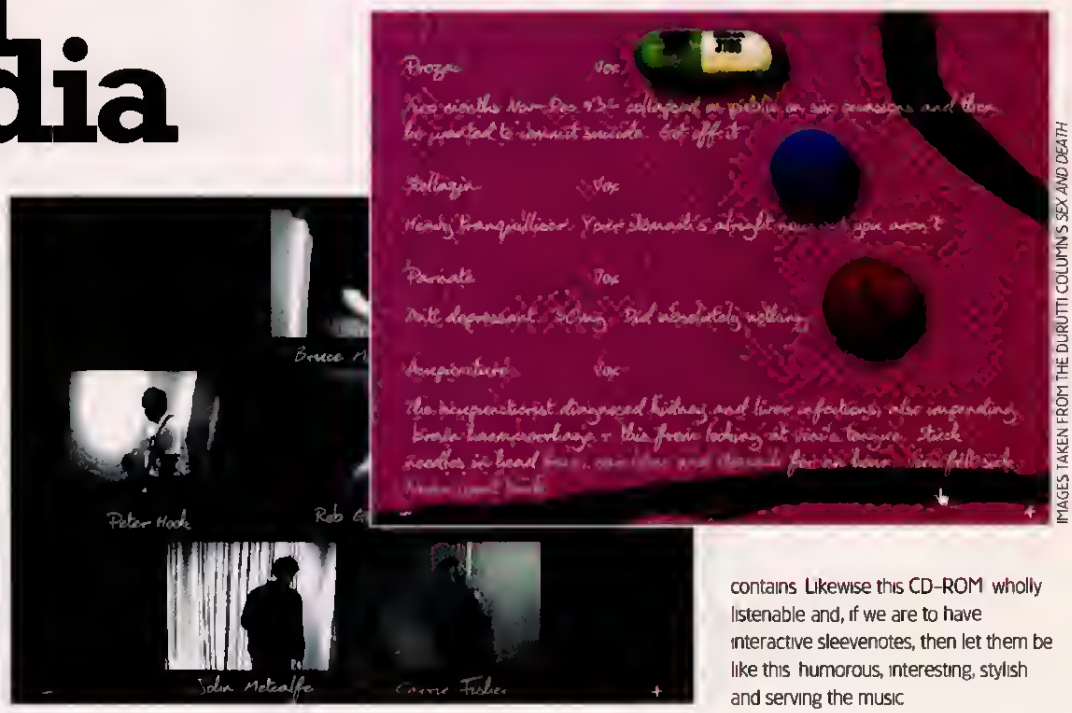
multi media

Mark Espiner scans the interface of music and interactive media



IMAGES TAKEN FROM THE DURUTTI COLUMN'S *SEX AND DEATH*

In the 80s, Factory Records was notorious as much for the design concepts of Peter Saville as the music of Joy Division (or even Crispy Ambulance). Some people bought the label's releases for the covers alone: remember A Certain Ratio's beautiful, multicoloured *Sextet*? Or New Order's "Blue Monday" 12" with the sleeve punched out to resemble a 5" floppy disk? Factory fused graphic and industrial design and pushed the record cover further into the realm of *art*.

And now the 12" canvas is almost as obsolete as the 5" floppy. The designer's response has so far been to continue thinking 12" for the 5" plastic CD jewel case and to build a booklet which invariably gets ripped apart by those two plastic lips holding it in place.

Meanwhile, in computer land the screensaver has slowly been establishing itself as an artform: the work of photographer Ansel Adams is already processed for computer screen display. Screensaver software recognises when your PC is at rest and attempts to save the screen from burning out by throwing up images. In the early days of computer nerd culture screensavers consisted of flying toasters or a virtual space flight, now beautiful black and white pictures of America's National Park dissolve on the screen and disappear at the flick of the mouse.

Factory Too, the relaunched version of the Factory label, in collaboration with the multimedia development company The Boot Room, have wired into this notion of the screensaver as a virtual canvas: for the interactive version of The Durutti Column's *Sex And Death* CD, released this month, they have included data to run an album cover screen saver. But this is only the front end of the extra material on the disc.

In the manner of a CD Plus or enhanced CD (although not strictly one itself), the remaining data functions as an annex to the music: you get the *Sex And Death* album in full digital audio quality playable on a standard CD player, while the remaining 200 or so megabytes of memory — there are 650 on a CD — are used to give supporting information to the music. This is another example of the interactive sleeve note, since all of the information relates directly to the music and musicians on the disc.

This is a rather rather dreary ambition for the multimedia CD, as it fails to expand on interactive design's potential to create a provocative or inspiring new medium for music. But compared to the enhanced CDs reviewed in this column in *The Wire* 141, this product handles itself very well. The add-on data provides useful context and background, and includes biographies of the group members, which are expressed through video and text; Vini Reilly's soundtrack for a short film featuring the DV8 dance company; a list of the infirm Reilly's prescribed therapies from Prozac to primal scream therapy; and his ideas about particular guitars and the sounds that they make. Alongside this specific group information is a biography of Buenaventura Durutti, the Spanish Civil War rebel whose life is charted from metalworker and trade union activist to anarchist leader (and you even get some newsreel footage of his funeral).

The downside to this release is the way the software sometimes interrupts the listening process. The CD should play continuously while you interact, but at certain points the music is halted for the computer to give you information instead, which is slightly frustrating. The screen set-up is also unsatisfactory. With such interactive music packages, the background desktop needs to be blacked out, if only to enhance the sensation of immersion, instead you can see your menu bar and wastebasket icon throughout. This is a strange omission, considering the close attention to design that is evident elsewhere, from the graphic detail within the product to the external packaging with its sandpaper sleeve.

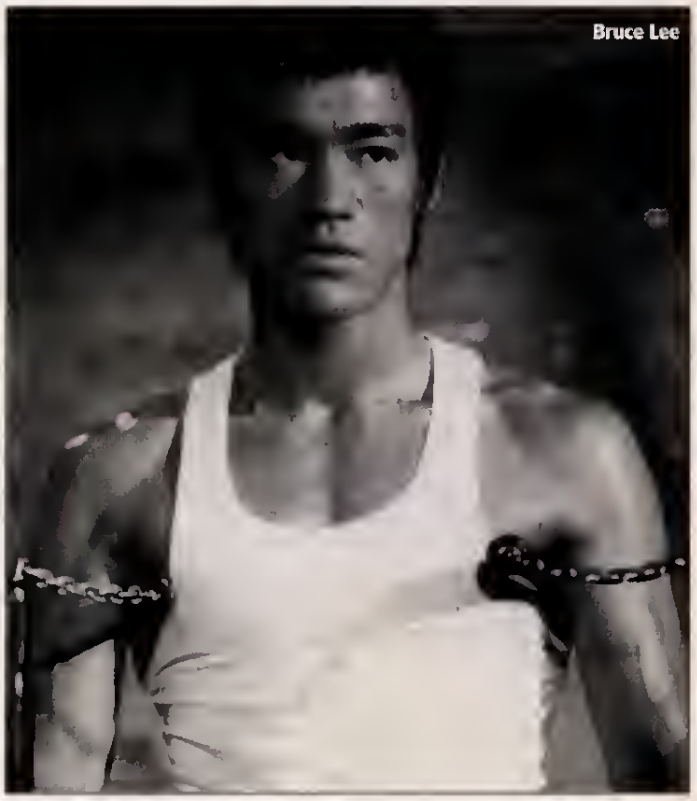
Interactivity has the potential to develop our sense of music and make us listen differently. Maybe the CD, with its limited storage space and enclosed parameters, is not the platform for this. Still, Factory are doing more than most to push the boundaries of this particular envelope, even releasing CD-Video to an unsuspecting public. New Order's "True Faith" single, for instance, is readable as a CD-V in anticipation of future CD-V players being a common domestic fixture.

Many who bought that single will be unaware of the extra dimension it contains. Likewise this CD-ROM: wholly listenable and, if we are to have interactive sleevenotes, then let them be like this: humorous, interesting, stylish and serving the music.

The same can't be said for the latest release from The Greatest Rock 'N' Roll Band In The World (The Rolling Stones to you and me). The CD-ROM version of *Voodoo Lounge* is an unmitigated failure. Inferior to S's *Interactive*, which in itself was far from brilliant, and designed in the style of the adventure CD-ROM *Myst*, *Voodoo Lounge* invites you to explore a house in deepest Louisiana where The Stones are having a party. It's entirely derivative and lacking any imagination: you get the video interviews, the influences, cut-out videos of Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood jamming in a computer-generated environment, all interspersed with some vague storyline concerning voodoo and a central character who owes much to Louis Cypher in Alan Parker's *Angel Heart*. It ran very slow on my machine, and that was with 24 megabytes of RAM, and has nothing to commend it or sustain any interest. And this from the group who tried to broadcast live on the net, and whose web page (*http://www.stones.com*) once showed real promise but now (apart from its use of MIT's 'video streamer' innovations and the new web programming language Java) is left lagging far behind. ☐ Sex And Death *and* Voodoo Lounge *are available now through PolyGram. E-mail Mark Espiner at mark@mmcorp.com*

david toop

discovers boredom is deep and mysterious



Bruce Lee

I don't have a thought in my head about music today. I am that pitiful thing, a columnist without a column. Like a comedian who finds life unfunny, like a butcher turned vegetarian, like a politician who cares more about himself than the state of the country (no, strike that last one), I am indifferent to my chosen subject.

I wonder why. Perhaps because there is a whiff of ennui in the air, a feeling of repetition, an overwhelming sensation of walking in circles over the same patch of flattened ground. I could talk about why Jungle failed to fulfil its promise this year, why HipHop is stuck in a holding pattern, why TripHop is so featureless, why the dance club phenomenon is as exciting as alcoholic lemonade, why Britpop is not much of anything, why 70s kitsch is a punchline in search of a joke, why jazz is meandering in its own back pages, why Techno is tired, why Ambient Electronica is only one idea away from oblivion, but could you swim against the tidal waves of indifference? Could you keep your eyes open?

Take the Freddie Mercury story. Freddie's dead, but he's recording a new album with Queen. The old ones were bad enough, of course, but a spot of investment recording went on, laying down basic vocals when Mercury knew he was dying. Now the rest of the band can add the trimmings in suitably up-to-date, leisurely fashion. Why, I really don't know.

So the ghost of Freddie is a here today, gone tomorrow, back again next week news story, the source of a chuckle and an opportunity for journalists to be their stereotypically hard-bitten, cynical selves, but it's not *that* interesting, is it? The process of bringing dead people back from the grave, so to speak, in order to create new works on Earth is so technologically facile now, so commercially calculated, so expected, that it's more banal than spooky.

I still regard the summit of exploitative grave robbing as Bruce Lee's *Game Of Death*, an appropriate title indeed. A film scored by John Barry, incidentally, which adds to its status as cult fiction, this sorry little piece of cinema history slotted Bruce Lee footage, scraps shot just before he died, into a minor classic of enforced deception. I swear that some of Lee's images are physically cut out of the celluloid and fixed in to other backgrounds. A weirdly distracting halo of light dances around the edges of his body, and though it might be tempting to interpret this as a psychophysical manifestation from the otherside, I'm more inclined to see it as the ultimate in movie making desperation.

Game Of Death may be tacky, but it's a lot more fun than The ex-Beatles recording with John Lennon, or very ex-Queen functionaries communing with their departed master. More revealing too, since exploitation arts were once too unsophisticated to explore their own reasons for existence. I could imagine a future anthropologist unearthing such relics from the ruins of the Hereafter Museum and theorising connections between technological development and unconscious yet deeply felt ancestor worship.

Feels normal though, does it not? Nothing incredible or impossible in the digital domain. Did Dimitra Liani-Papandreou really lie naked on a Greek beach being manipulated by an abnormally long-armed lesbian or was it all just political dirty tricks and image manipulation? Those Native American chants by Fearless Brave, are they really ancient chants and dances or might they be the fevered studio fantasies of a German Techno-chancer? Does anybody care? Freddie Mercury and John Lennon whacking out some new songs, no more unusual than seeing a wasp in November, which I just did. Just another by-product of seasonal strangeness, right?

Last week I'm at the Oxford Circus end of Regent Street, a spare hour on my hands between morning appointments. At a loss, I wander around Liberty (as you do) and in the basement I come across some extremely interesting Nepalese drums, black demonic things that rumble with faint echoes of high-altitude shamanism.

Now I know that the digitised chants of Fearless Brave are just another squeak in the absorption of so-called ethnic culture as interior decor and spiritual window dressing. Not so much *World Of Interiors*, more world *as* interiors. You only had to walk around the Conran Shop five years ago to know that ethnic was imminent. I was shaken, if not stirred, however, to find something so covetable in a shop notonously frequented by lunching ladies from the shires, looming patrician males of vacant countenance cloaked in expensive raincoats and Japanese tourists.

Actually, the Japanese tourists have their own shops in London now, but that's another story. What I remember is a time when such drums were sought out in junk and antique shops by improvising drummers, an obscure untouchable caste which seemed to constitute the sole constituency in demand of Burmese spinning gongs, shamanistic frame drums and Japanese temple percussion. The kind of percussive sonic objects once collected so painstakingly by Edgard Varèse as symbols (and cymbals) of the future soundworld can now be bought for a song, or credit card equivalent, in a shop better known as a supplier of silk scarves to the upper middle classes. The empire strikes back.

The present transitions in music making are so extraordinary, so far-reaching yet so fleeting that they become commonplace in a moment. Like changes in banking, computing, broadcasting or the public consumption of alcohol, some time can elapse before you realise that the little world in which you live has changed irrevocably. And if the dead sing and dance again, or if funerary objects and noisemakers from distant mountain kingdoms turn up in your local supermarket, shelved somewhere between the Ragu sauce, the rambutans and the Balti blaster in a screwtop jar, what's to say about it? Probably about a thousand words. □

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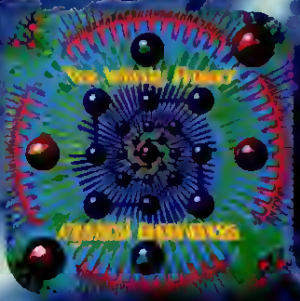

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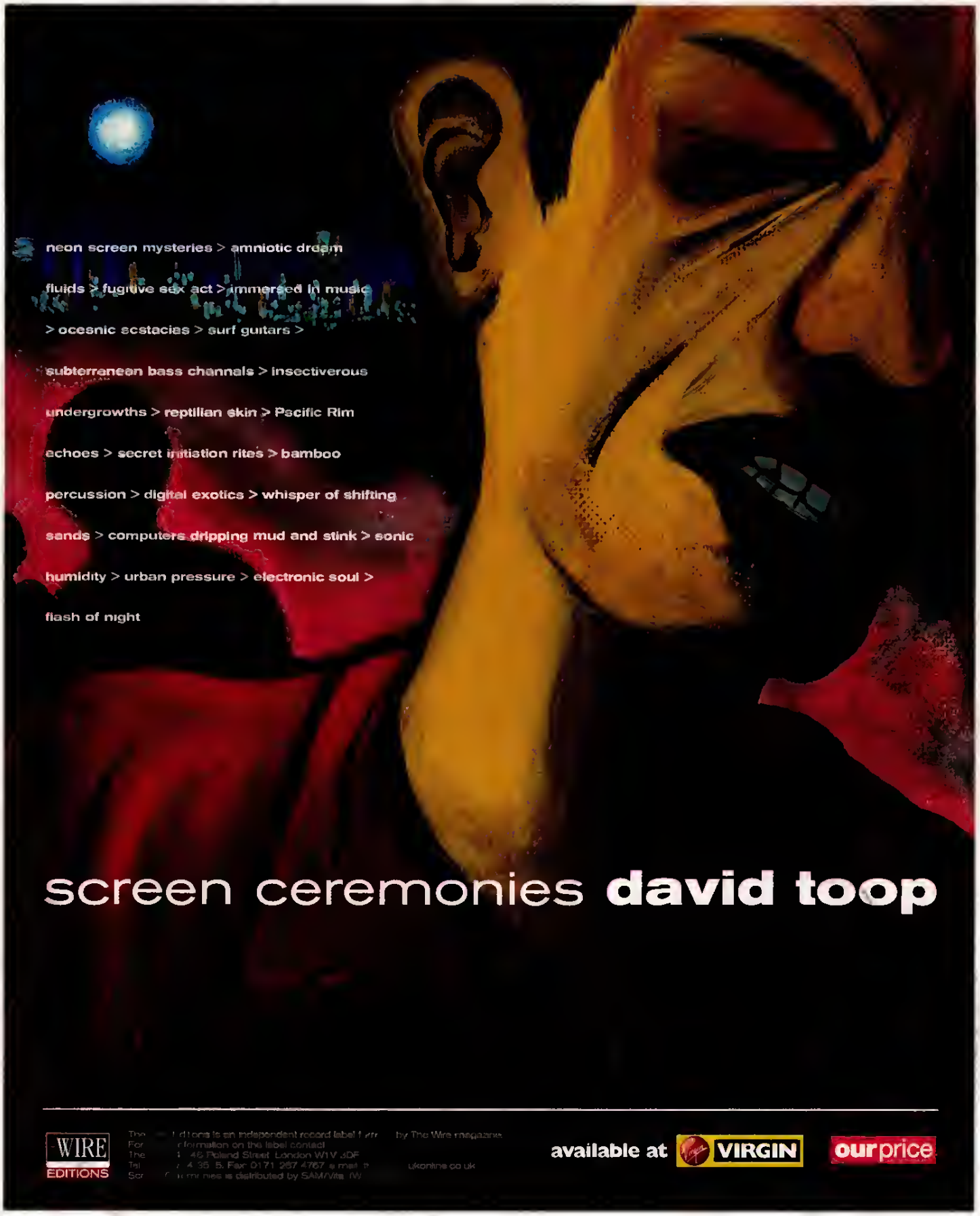
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